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## Little bursts of genius

John Hayes

HELMUT VON ERFFA and ALLEN STALEY  
The Paintings of Benjamin West  
606pp. Yale University Press. £50.  
0 300 03355 9

Then and now, and now, it seems, the rehabilitation of Benjamin West – that industrious painter-courier brought up on the frontier of the American colonies who was for over a quarter of a century titular head of the English art establishment – makes a fascinating and instructive case-history. Keats, when he was confronted by West's last major work, "Death on the Pale Horse", was bitterly disappointed: "It is a wonderful picture when West's age is considered; but there is nothing to be intense upon." Byron had no reservations; he was scathing in his condemnation of "the flattering, feeble doltard West, Europe's worst dauber, and poor Britain's best". Allan Cunningham in 1831 called his painting "cold, formal, bloodless, and passionless"; the Redgraves in 1866 accused him of covering "acres of canvass with much that is inept and mediocre, leaving him no time to produce one work, hardly one figure, evidencing intense feeling or keen perception"; and as late as 1969 Sir Oliver Millar spoke of "dull and fustian stuff". This was the artist who had captured the public imagination with his masterly apotheosis of Orlando Wolfe, who died the most prominent painter of his day in Britain and whom John Galt, West's first biographer, solemnly declared would "stand in the first rank" and "be classed with... Michelangelo and Raphael".

The appearance of this magnificent catalogue of West's paintings, some four decades in the making, follows hard on the heels of the great Reynolds exhibitions at the Grand Palais and the Royal Academy, and it is difficult to avoid comparing the two men. They were fifteen years apart in age. Reynolds was born in 1723, West in 1738. Both came from modest and religious provincial backgrounds. Both had early absorbed the tenets of Jonathan Richardson – heady stuff for aspiring youngsters – and both were obsessively ambitious, socially no less than professionally. Both spent three formative years in Italy, absorbing classical antiquity and grand manner painting. Neither, however, had learnt to draw, though both amassed magnificent collections of drawings, and they shared a need to disguise, with the arts of design, a lack of technical proficiency.

West succeeded Reynolds as second President of the Royal Academy and served in that capacity even longer than he. The difference between the two with the most far-reaching consequences was that West got on with George III and Reynolds did not.

Reynolds, determined, like the king, to elevate the state of the visual arts in Britain, preached the primacy of history painting in his *Discourses*, one of the classics of art literature, but was himself obliged to pursue the humbler path of portraiture. This situation arose not only because the majority of British patrons preferred to buy foreign, and for the most part "old master", history painting, and to confine their employment of British painters to portraits, but because West had cornered the limited market and secured the post of Historical Painter to the King.

In Paris in 1763, on the completion of his studies in Italy, West had half a mind to return to America rather than to establish himself in London. "What", he wondered to a friend, "would [I] do among the Reynolds and Ransays?" Once there, however, he prospered on a tide of extraordinary good fortune coupled with a remarkable gift for being in the right place, or doing the right thing, at exactly the right time. It was a fortunate coincidence that four of his American friends and patrons happened to be in London when he arrived. They had influential connections which proved useful, and West quickly became well known. It was a help that he was a personable young man, who cut a dash with his prowess at figure skating. His pictures struck the right note, too, in those early days of annual public exhibitions in London. "Angelia and Medoro" and "Cymon and Iphigenia", pictures he had brought from Rome, were widely acclaimed (though not by that fastidious connoisseur Horace Walpole) when they appeared at the 1764 summer exhibition; the first was an attractive essay in rococo dalliance couched in gently Titianesque terms, perhaps influenced largely by Pompeo Batoni; the second has not survived.

One admirer of these works, William Markham, the classical scholar, introduced West to Johnson, Burke, Lord Rockingham (who offered him a substantial salary to paint historical subjects for Wentworth Woodhouse), and several high-ranking churchmen who became his patrons. The most important of the latter was Robert Hay Drummond, Archbishop of York, the cultivated grandson of the great book and manuscript collector, Robert Har-

ley. In 1767 Drummond commissioned a subject from Roman history with a suitable moral lesson for a cultured ecclesiastic, "Agrippina landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus"; delighted with West's dignified treatment of this noble theme, and anxious to encourage him further, he introduced him to George III who, equally impressed by the work, himself commissioned a subject of similar Roman rectitude and courage, "The Departure of Regulus from Rome". West's sobriety of manner and the severe neo-classical style of painting he had developed since 1764 – with its clarity of narrative and setting, outline and expression – were well calculated to appeal to the high-minded young monarch (who happened, and surely this was important, too, to be the same age as the painter). So it was that West was brought into close contact with the king at an especially propitious time, precisely the moment (1768) when George III was formulating his plans for the Royal Academy, and positively looking for a young hero in propaganda ideals of high art. West never looked back – at least not for the next twenty-five years.

Allen Staley charts West's career as a painter in an introductory essay of just the right length which tells us, without a word wasted, everything we need to know. Few art historians have a more comprehensive grasp of the interrelationships in this period, and West's place in, and influence upon, the development of contemporary British art is well defined; much research still needs to be done, however, on a decade to decade basis, to elucidate in detail trends which were becoming increasingly complex as a result of a rich intermingling of neo-classical, picturesque, sublime and romantic tendencies. The publication, early next year, of John Sunderland's monograph on that tempestuous, short-lived but seminal figure, John Hamilton Mortimer, will bring more evidence to bear.

West was splendidly plausible as a student. Though largely self-taught, one of the portraits he did in Rome was mistaken for a work by the painter he most admired there, Anton Raphael Mengs, an artist of impeccable academic upbringing who was to set him on the art-historical course he subsequently pursued in Italy, the study of the Carracci, Correggio, Tintoretto, Titian and Veronese. The most influential British painter then in Rome was Gavin Hamilton, who had just embarked on his series of monumental canvases depicting scenes from the *Iliad*; and it says much for West that he did

not succumb to Hamilton's dramatic baroque style, coarse and overblown though he must have found it, but went on, in Staley's words, "to develop a consistent, compelling, and convincing Neo-Classical language distinct from that of either" Hamilton or Mengs. His neo-classical style of the mid and later 1760s, with its quiet dignity and soft breadth of lighting, was perhaps West's most notable achievement, and George III should be given credit for recognizing it even if, no judge of painting, he did so for moral rather than aesthetic reasons. This phase was very soon overshadowed, however, by the furor surrounding "The Death of General Wolfe", exhibited at the Academy in 1771.

During the century and a quarter when West's reputation was in eclipse, it was the supposedly revolutionary nature of this work that kept his name alive and upon which, nearly fifty years ago, the Warburg iconographers seized with such enthusiasm. In fact, as far as West was concerned, there was nothing deliberately innovative about "The Death of General Wolfe". He had already painted as a straightforward narrative a well-known subject from the French-British wars in America – the incident of General Johnson saving the wounded French commander from a vengeful Indian's tomahawk after the British victory at Lake George in 1755; this admired and generous (indeed courageous) action was in keeping with his Roman themes. West's treatment of Wolfe's death at Quebec as a heroic contemporary event in contemporary military dress (against which he was warned by both Reynolds and George III) certainly went beyond this precedent in intention but, as Staley points out, was perfectly consistent with his attempts "to present plausible reconstructions of remote historical events" in his scenes from Roman history. In this context the key word is "plausible". There were no eye-witness accounts of Regulus leaving Rome, but we may agree that West painted a convincing as well as heroic representation of the event. He did the same for the death of Wolfe. The fall of the brilliant young general at the very moment of victory was deeply poignant, but, instead of portraying it with pedantic historical accuracy, which he could well have done with the aid of contemporary accounts, he chose to emphasize and exalt the poignancy by modelling the principal group of figures on paintings of lamentations over the dead Christ, with the Union Jack taking the place of the Cross. West had an epic imagination, and he was well schooled in the

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240 pp. 0 521 32086 0 £25.00 net  
African Studies Series 49

### Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, England



history of his art.

As West became more involved with dramatic subject-matter – battle scenes from British history stimulated by a burgeoning patriotic feeling, evocations of awe and terror inspired by Burke's concept of "the Sublime", notably subjects from the Old Testament and the Apocalypse – so his style evolved from neo-classical to neo-baroque, and his handling became correspondingly more fluent, his figures more vigorous, his poses and groupings more exaggerated, his lighting more theatrical, his colouring more vivid, not to say lurid. Two wholly different interpretations of the "Pactus and Arria" theme (1766 and 1781) demonstrate the transition admirably; but the *locus classicus* of the new manner is the huge "Alexander III of Scotland saved from a Stag by Colin Fitzgerald" of 1786, a *mélange* of rearing horses and concentrated action strongly influenced by Rubens's hunting scenes.

This transformation in style was encouraged by West's main activity in mid-career, the decoration with colossal compositions of the Royal Chapel and the Audience Chamber at Windsor Castle, which, from 1778, George III was intent on refurbishing as the principal royal residence (the nineteen canvases West painted for the Royal Chapel to illustrate "the progress of Revealed Religion" are now scattered, the project having been suspended in 1801 and the pictures reverting to West's sons by the wishes of George IV, subsequently being sold). It was to these and other ambitious works that West's lack of academic training became sadly evident; he was unable, on a large scale, to sustain the vigour and brilliance of his sketches. Beekford, who was his most significant patron in the 1790s, was painfully accurate when he observed that "the original spirit evaporated long before the completion of the great tome painting, where his men and women too often look like wooden lay figures covered with drapery". None the less, West persisted, and his last two important paintings, "Christ Rejected" and "Death on the Pale Horse" (from the Book of Revelation), anticipated in scale and pretentiousness of presentation the celebrated "Crucifixion" at Forest Lawn. For they measured no less than twenty-two and twenty-five feet across respectively and were exhibited individually with elaborate explanatory texts, as public entertainments; people flocked to see them in their thousands.

West's oeuvre was large; the present catalogue numbers 739 items, including oil sketches and drawings regarded as complete works in themselves. The material is arranged thematically, beginning with historical subjects and ending with portraits. West's entries, which are based on the material collected for over thirty years by Helmut von Erffa – who died in 1979, only three years after Staley was invited to collaborate on the work – occupy three-quarters of the volume, and are a monumental task. The author, laudably rigorous in method, does not enter into speculation as to why West should have painted a particular subject or whether it might contain topical allusions, and influences are normally only noted if they are documented or proposed by earlier writers; more frequent discussion of possible sources for West's designs might have demonstrated the originality or otherwise of his copious invention but, as Staley remarks of the work of the mid-1760s, "it would be an idle exercise to attempt to sort out the mix of ingredients as they were absorbed and reflected in West's paintings", and West himself seems to have answered the question when he pronounced: "Artists could not be expected merely by the force of their own conceptions to carry their practice as far as with fine models before them." No relevant enquiry is shielded. For example, dealing with a lesser-known canvas such as "Lord Clive Receiving from the Mogul the Grant of the Duanney", the circumstances of the commission, related drawings, versions, the intended positioning of the picture, the content, and the event depicted are all discussed; most significantly we learn that, like most of West's paintings of recent historical events, the picture is not an accurate reconstruction – the ceremony did not take place in the palatial setting shown but in Clive's tent, with an armchair placed on Clive's dining-table serving as a throne for the Mogul Emperor. Once again West devised an epic setting suited

to the event depicted – a crucial one in the history of the British in India. Courbet would have relished painting the event as it actually happened; a Romantic like Delacroix would surely have followed the example set by West.

We know that West went to immense pains to assemble accurate information for inclusion in his later historical pictures, notably in respect of costume and architecture; and in this habit of mind, shared by his contemporaries Zoffany and Wheatley among others, he was followed by many of the Romantic artists, as well, of course, as by the Victorians, who were obsessed by getting the detail right. But the way people might have dressed, or the things they had about them, were one thing; the *mise-en-scène*, the actions of the persons he depicted, and the impact of those actions on the spectator, were quite another. West saw himself as a great imaginative artist in the tradition of the High Renaissance; in spite of radical changes in his formal language, changes in his choice of subject-matter, and a flexibility characteristic of late eighteenth-century art, his work was all of a piece, and scale had much to do with it. He never forgot the Stanzes of Raphael in the Vatican. But we need to know more about the roots of his imagination.

It lies outside the scope of a catalogue raisonné to tell us much, except incidentally, about West the man; we can turn, if we wish, to the full-scale biography by Robert Alberts published less than ten years ago. None the less an enquiry which set West's painting in the context of his character and way of life, his teaching and, above all, his presidency of the Royal Academy, would be well worth the undertaking: Staley's catalogue and the completion of the new Yale edition of Joseph Farington's diary, which covers the whole period of West's presidency, provide the essential data. Ann Abrams's valuable recent study of West's early career (which appeared too late for Staley to use) takes us along this road, but her main purpose is deeper still, to explain West's history painting of the 1760s and early 1770s in terms of contemporary British culture and historical events; this, too, although an approach which requires a Namier-like breadth of knowledge, insight and balance, is one that could be developed with profit.

West was a kind-hearted family man, simple in his tastes, serene even in adversity, never out of temper; the many American pupils who passed through his studio were devoted to him. He was firm and not always circumspect in his political views. He never denied his support for his compatriots in their struggle against his own patron, the king; he supported the anti-slavery movement and went so far as to deliver a Quaker abolitionist petition to Queen Charlotte; he was a friend of Tom Paine (admittedly before 1789) and believed in the ideals of the French Revolution. He took himself very seriously. He did not think it odd to praise his own works – "a little burst of genius, sir!" – and was an unabashed self-publicist. He turned down a knighthood because he wanted, and felt he had earned, a hereditary title. There seems to have been an understanding with the king that he would be made a baronet, but it was never offered. He was not an unqualified success as President of the Royal Academy. The quarrelsome Academicians were too much for him, and he even suffered a spell out of office; he was replaced, temporarily, by Wyatt, who had helped to ditch him with the king. His belief that only a virtuous artist could be a great artist was laughed at, and his deliberate, monotonous style of public speaking was lamentable; Flaxman considered one of his early Discourses "both for matter and delivery a disgrace to the profession and thought some means should be used to prevent him from delivering another". Yet he was always willing to learn from fresh experiences – in 1802 he pointed out large canvases, sadly no longer extant, influenced by the Elgin Marbles, "sublime specimens of the purest sculpture" – and inevitably, with longevity, became, in at least a formal sense, the Grand Old Man of British painting, ensuring, with Galt's biography, which he virtually dictated himself, that the myth of his rise to fame and ultimate greatness should be perpetuated.

All his life West tried to impress. He claimed sole credit for the founding of the British Institution: "to such lengths", Farington exploded, "does West's self-love carry him?"



Benjamin West's pen and ink drawing, "Marinus on the Ruins of Carthage", 1796; it is reproduced from the book reviewed here.

we have seen, he believed in scale. Each of his four versions of "The Death of Wolfe" was bigger than the last. He was never happier than in the execution of his huge decorative schemes for George III. He believed increasingly in demonstrating his artistic and historical knowledge and skill in reportage until his pictures were stifled by documentation – "The Death of Nelson", which includes fifty-eight portraits of officers and seamen present, is a prime example. Northcote said that West "could give you chapter and verse for every touch he put on the canvas". Perhaps Keats put his finger on it. In spite of all West's efforts, all that output, all that invention, there was "nothing to be intense upon". Was it all too organized? He worked office hours and, unlike Reynolds (or

Gainsborough, or anyone) was perfectly happy to be interrupted as he painted.

West was both eclectic and responsive to fashion and demand. Even in the crucially important year of the Academy's opening exhibition, when he sought to influence public taste with "The Departure of Regulus from Rome", he was ready to paint the playfully rococo "The Stolen Kiss" for General Stirling Lawrence. An Abrams concludes her book by suggesting that it would have been better for West's reputation had he died in his mid-thirties. With Staley's superlative catalogue, in which every picture is illustrated, the more important in large and good colour and with fine, well-chosen details, the reader is in a position to judge for himself.

## The great unheard

Robert Snell

CHRISTOPHER PARSONS and MARTHA WARD  
A Bibliography of Salon Criticism in Second Empire Paris  
288pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
0521 321492

"Criticism has little power today and it is seldom that anyone listens", complained the art critic M. H. Dumesnil in 1859. Yet never before had so much verbiage been expended, in widely circulated print, on the subject of contemporary art and artists; never before had it been possible for the successful, professional critic to make such a good living. The problem, however, was not simply that the critic was unable to make himself heard above the general noise; Dumesnil's complaint hints at a deeper disquiet. As the market for this particular form of journalism grew, so critics in nineteenth-century France seem to have felt less and less confident in their roles as arbiters of taste, the role which Diderot and others had shaped in the previous century. Certainly they could be strident – witness the reactions to Manet's "Olympia" in 1865 – but without, usually, being able to bring to bear very solid reasons for their outrage. Critics' energies, we may suspect, were also spent in trying to overcome a sense of their own confusion about what they were supposed to be.

Christopher Parsons and Martha Ward's valuable *Bibliography* will now make it possible for scholars thoroughly to test such suspicions. Although their work does not claim to be exhaustive, and deals only with the Parisian press, it lists 1,619 Salon reviews (from single articles to long series) published between 1852 and 1870, written by about 870 critics, and scattered among nearly 400 newspapers and periodicals. It provides an annual illustrative cross-section of Parisian art criticism.

The Second Empire saw a boom in newspaper and periodical publishing, as in so many other fields of financial speculation; it also marks the zenith of the state-sponsored Salon, which more than tripled in size during the period, and was still the principal exhibiting

platform for French artists. The *Bibliography* is itself part of a recent boom in Second Empire studies, one consequence of which has been a shift of attention away from individual artists and *salonniers*, towards an examination of the ideological boundaries of critical discourse, of patterns of response and the means by which they were articulated, of assumptions about representation and its social connotations. As the book's cogent preface also suggests, this now vastly expanded field of accessible Salon reviews (most are in the *Bibliographie Nationale*) should remind us of how little we know about the social composition and function of the mid-nineteenth-century critical milieu, and its relationship to the history, structure and ownership of the press. It will, for example, facilitate inquiry into the connection between critical values and those sustained by other areas of public discourse. On a question of readership and the culture codes employed by critics to engage particular sections of society, there is the existence of specialist journals publishing appropriately thematic reviews – *Le Coiffeur parisien*, *Le catholique*, *La France médicale*, *La Revue nationale*, *Jockey*, *Le Vélocipède illustré* – which in turn should lead us to a clearer view of the complex of disparate interests held together in the Salons themselves. The *Bibliography* will also help open up the issue of vested interests and corruption within art criticism, a present already under way for other branches of nineteenth-century journalism.

"With the upheaval of the market economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled", wrote Walter Benjamin in a classic observation on Second Empire society; the critical journalism will possibly be recognized as just such a monument. Art critics were potentially subject to the demands of market and sectional interests to a degree never experienced before; at the same time, the inflation of their craft, a monument to bourgeois thought of the eighteenth century, required them to exercise a discriminating, almost aesthetic and emotional authority. However, perhaps, Dumesnil's perplexity and ambivalence about the *Bibliography* will help us chart the tensions and fatigue within the Second Empire monumental critical edifice.

## Between Court and Country

Norman Gash

R. G. THORNE (Editor)  
The House of Commons 1790–1820  
Volume One: Survey. 300pp.  
Volume Two: Constituencies. 740pp.  
Volume Three: Members. A–F. 864pp.  
Volume Four: Members. G–P. 920pp.  
Volume Five: Members. Q–Y. 840pp.  
Secker and Warburg. £225 the set.  
0436 321016

These five latest volumes from the History of Parliament Trust deal with the momentous period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and the post-war era of distress and agitation. It is the sixth section of the *History of Parliament* to be issued since the Trust was set up in its present form in 1951, and there are five more in preparation which it is hoped to publish during the next fifteen years if finances are available. When complete the series will provide a continuous history of the old unreformed House of Commons from 1386 to 1832.

At present the first and last sections are missing and there are large gaps in the seventeenth century. The longest continuous run of sections covers the Georgian period from 1715 onwards: a circumstance which is not surprising in view of the origin of the project in the late Sir Lewis Namier's epoch-making work on Hanoverian politics. When concluded the series will constitute in erudition, comprehensiveness and sheer size one of the major collective achievements of British historical scholarship. Such an enterprise would have been beyond the resources, both intellectual and financial, of any single university. It is only proper therefore to draw attention to the fact that the cost of publishing these latest volumes has been met partly by a Treasury grant, partly by generous contributions from private donors, among whom are the Wolfson Foundation and a large number of British industrial and banking firms.

The pattern of these 1790–1820 volumes is the same as for the previous section (1754–90), the only novelty being the inclusion from the Union of 1801 of Irish constituencies and members. The first volume is devoted to an introductory survey by R. G. Thorne, who took over the editorship from the late A. Aspinall when his sight began to fail. The second volume deals with the constituencies, and the remaining three (in many ways the core of the work) with the biographies of the individual MPs who served in this period.

For the ordinary historical student it is the survey volume which will be most easily assimilable and most immediately rewarding. That is not to say that it provides light reading. The whole work is essentially one for specialists. But it is in Volume One that the reader will find the summaries and the generalizations, the discussions and comparisons, and the tabular statistics which will guide him through the labyrinth of microscopic detail in Volumes Two to Five. It is here that he will learn about such matters as the incidence of contested elections, the political differences between boroughs and counties and between the more distant shires and those nearer the metropolis, the significance of patronage, the social and political composition of the House of Commons. There are useful analyses of the part played by the Scottish and Irish electoral systems in national affairs and much is said about the groupings in the House, the splits and schisms, the effect of successive general elections, the conclusions to be drawn from surviving division lists, and the general voting habits of members.

A few random examples may be given of the information now available to us. During the immediate post-Waterloo period over a third of the Members of the House of Commons are recorded as having voted both for and against the ministers; the hardest-fought general election in the boroughs between 1790 and 1820 was that of 1818 – and that by a considerable margin; and there was more polarization of parties in the 1818–20 parliament than in the previous one. It is not only political history that is enriched. The analyses of the age, family background, education, religion and extra-parliamentary interests of MPs open up new veins of social history for the diligent researcher. Why was it that there were more self-made men in the House than in the period

before 1790; more who had gone to the great public schools (Eton, Westminster, Harrow, Winchester and Charterhouse in that order); more who were brought up outside the three established Churches, even though these were still in a small minority; fewer products of dissenting academies?

If the first volume is, as it were, the shop window, the remaining four constitute the warehouse at the back, full of consumer goods. The gazetteer of electoral constituencies not only provides a detailed account of each county, together with its satellite boroughs, but for good measure adds bibliographical information on sources for those who may wish to delve deeper into their parliamentary history. An invaluable reference-book for the ordinary historian, it will also act as a starting-point for future research. Most useful of all, perhaps, to the political historian will be the three volumes of biographies. One may have one's doubts about the notion which seems to have been behind Namier's original concept of collective or aggregate biography – that the nature of a parliamentary assembly can be best inferred from a study of the entities which composed it. In an institution like the House of Commons the whole is far larger than the sum of its parts. Nevertheless, it is a great thing for British history to have, so to speak, a biographical dictionary of all past Members of Parliament. The *History of Parliament* Trust would have justified its existence if it had done nothing more than this.

As it is, we can now get to know the obscure, silent majority of backbenchers as we have never been able to do before. And what a remarkable and miscellaneous collection they were in this (as probably in every other) period: sons of peers, nabobs and *nouveaux riches*, army and navy officers, playwrights and physicians, solid squires, rogues and bankrupts, pious "Saints", lunatics and suicides! The temptation to quote is irresistible. Here are three from the final volume: Evan Lloyd Vaughan, the archetypal independent country gentleman, member of a family which represented Merioneth for the larger part of the eighteenth century, who never spoke in debate and almost always voted for "Country" against "Court"; William Wigram, brewery manager and later Master of the Puckeridge Hounds, who rarely spoke or took part in divisions but when he did supported the government of the day; Thomas Whitmore, Foxite MP for Bridgnorth, who on one occasion managed to divide the House against Pitt when to a state described as one-third mad and two-thirds drunk and eventually drowned himself in a lead cistern in his own shrubbery.

In the biographies of the better-known politicians, already commemorated in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and probably of least a couple of modern biographies, there is less in the way of novelty and more room for disagreement. The main editorial problem doubtless was to decide on the relative allocation of space. The length of the biographies, we are told, varies according to the parliamentary standing of the member and the availability of material on him. We are reminded that full-length lives of most of the major figures can be found elsewhere and that about a quarter of the MPs in this period appear in the *DNB*. Particular attention, therefore, has been given to members of the second rank. As a guide to editorial thinking this is less than clear and not a great deal of illumination is obtained when one turns to the actual biographies of the more important men. Lord Liverpool, for instance, the longest-serving Prime Minister in this period after Pitt, is dismissed in four pages compared with the eight given to Addington, who was Prime Minister for just over three years, and the nine to Perceval, who lasted for less than two and a half. The discrepancy can be explained by the fact that Liverpool went to the House of Lords as early as 1803 – or so one would suppose, were it not that Addington followed him there only two years later. That in turn brings one up against the oddity of a history of Parliament which does not deal with the House of Lords. Elevation to the peerage, however, has nothing to do with another anomaly. Why has Castlereagh, whose parliamentary career was as long as Caonling's and whose importance in government and the House of Commons in this period even greater, been allotted only nineteen pages?

compared with the latter's twenty-six? Since the general editor was responsible for both biographies, it must be presumed that the difference in treatment was deliberate. It is odd, all the same.

In his *Survey*, Thorne has wisely refrained from generalizing either widely or dogmatically on such slippery questions as the nature of political parties in the pre-reform period. Voting statistics, for example, clearly cannot tell us everything. Division-lists show with reasonable accuracy who voted for, who against, and who were absent. What they cannot reveal are the motives which were behind that voting behaviour; and the more obscure the MP, the more difficult it is to offer even a conjecture. One may wonder, however, whether enough attention has been paid to that ultimate weapon of a beleaguered executive, the threat of resignation. It is obvious that at no time between 1815 and 1827 was a majority of the House of Commons prepared to force the government out of office; though that is not the same as saying that the ministers had an assured working majority. Indeed, the proposals of government always had to be framed with an eye on the amount of support, or the amount of opposition, likely to be forthcoming on each particular measure. This is something clearly relevant to any discussion of the political allegiances or party affiliations of members.

Take as an example the very full analysis of the division-list on Tierney's censure motion of May 1819. Since the issue was deliberately made one of confidence in the government, there was in fact little danger of a ministerial defeat. On the other hand Thorne drops the unguarded comment that in the following month Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was left to weather as best he could Tierney's attack on his plan of finance. In reality, as far as government policy was concerned, this was a much more ticklish matter than the direct but futile censure motion which had strengthened rather than weakened the government's position. The financial resolutions

were crucial to the Cabinet's whole future economic policy and the machinery of executive influence was mobilized to ensure that they went through intact. It was made a question of government survival; ministers told their supporters that they were ready to resign on the issue; and the outcome was a victory by a margin of nearly 200 votes compared with less than 180 which they had secured in May.

This, it must be said, is a rare example of Homer nodding. In five massive volumes crammed with dates, names, statistics and comment, there are bound to be some errors of fact and a few contentious statements. There is already in the first volume a list of addenda and corrigenda, and doubtless more will come to light as the volumes are worked over by historians. This is inevitable and unimportant compared with the immense achievement which stands before us. What we have been given is not only an unprecedented addition to our knowledge of parliamentary history in this period but a completely new foundation on which that history can now be based. No discussion in future on the nature of late Georgian politics can be treated seriously unless it takes into account the copious material provided here. It is simultaneously an exhaustive repository of facts, a compendium of organized information, an indispensable guide to the parliamentary life of the time, and a powerful stimulus for further study.

J. R. Dinwiddie's *From Luddism to the First Reform Bill: Reform in England 1810–1832* (88pp. Basil Blackwell. Paperback, £3.25, 0 631 13952 4), one of the Historical Association Studies, has recently been published. The book examines the reform movements of 1810–32 in relation to the ideas that inspired them as well as to the social interests that lay behind them; an attempt is made to provide answers to the question of which groups were seeking political reforms and what were their reasons for doing so.

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# A ruler from the underworld

## John Keep

ALEX DE JONGE  
Stalin and the Shaping of the Soviet Union  
560pp. Collins Harvill. £17.51.  
0002168049

An eerie reproduction of a painting adorns the cover of Alex de Jonge's lively and authoritative new biography of the twentieth century's most awesome dictator. It shows the ageing Josef Vissarionovich looking at a mirror which stands, icon-like, on a kind of altar draped in red. His eyes have a sly red glint; his expression combines fear, malice and suspicion. There could be no better visual depiction of what we have come to call, by the Soviet euphemism, "the cult of the individual".

Stalin's remarkably swift and smooth ascent to total power owed much to his personal traits. Unloved as a child, he grew up bitter, vengeful and ambitious, blind to the moral implications of his conduct. In personal relationships he was rude, deceitful, often brutal; he learned to camouflage his weaknesses and excelled at playing an assumed role. We do not need to believe all the tales told about him by Georgii Menshikovs – for instance, that his real father was the famous explorer Przewalski – to appreciate that he was most at home in the underworld. "Stalin liked and respected the criminal east of mind, ruthless and realistic in its recognition of self-interest as the only motive."

But he was much more than a "street person", a thug; he had courage, resilience, and a gift for expounding the revolutionary credo in a dogmatic style he learned in the seminary. The high point in young Dzugashvili's early career in the Social Democratic underground came after 1905, when he helped to organize several notorious expropriations – "exes" in Party jargon – which netted the Bolsheviks large sums of money. These practical skills and his dedication to the cause were appreciated by Lenin, although as late as 1915 the great man had trouble remembering his surname and had to ask Zinoviev for help. "Koba" was then in Siberian exile, whence he returned in 1917 to rejoin the central Bolshevik nucleus. His posing differences with Lenin over strategy are common knowledge; less obvious are the nuances he added to his chief's thoroughgoing Internationalism. Stalin was not one of those comrades who thought that socialism could be built in Russia only if the revolution spread to the West. He had a Great Russian chauvinist (indeed, antisemitic) streak that surfaced clearly in the discussions of 1922–3 on the constitution of the Soviet Union.

By this time he was unstoppable: too much authority had been entrusted to his hands. Lenin's half-hearted attempt to have Stalin replaced as General Secretary failed, for several reasons: not just because of his illness, which placed him in Stalin's over-solicitous care; or because Trotsky missed every opportunity to assert his rival; or even because Stalin had the Party's membership files at his finger-tips; but basically because the other Old Bolsheviks, however much they feared or disliked him, needed his ruthless qualities to govern a population still unreconciled to "proletarian dictatorship".

The great struggle between these neo-Dladoshi is familiar terrain, but de Jonge handles it deftly. He shows how Stalin's talent for dissimulation led him to efface himself as his fellow triumphs demolished Trotsky; and how his amateurish efforts to develop a new doctrine of "Leninism", though it earned him the ridicule of educated Marxists like Radek ("Why", he wondered, "did Stalin restrict himself to socialism in one country? What was wrong with socialism in one district or even one street?"), reassured inexperienced activists, and probably also appealed to many simple folk unfamiliar with the philosophy of Marx, mistrustful of Jews and foreigners, and deeply imbued with that Great Russian chauvinism which Lenin used to castigate.

De Jonge does not try to assess the relative significance of Stalin's ideological appeal and his control of the Party apparatus, the sort of metaphysical question that academic historians like to puzzle over. Scorning such idle speculation, he explores, so far as the sparse sources permit, the mechanics of Stalin's per-

sonal secretariat and the so-called "special sector", his "department of private intelligence and dirty tricks", which developed into "an extraordinary instrument for control... better by far than any more conspicuous Praetorian Guard". By the 1930s its representatives had penetrated the entire administration, including the armed forces. It handled all politically sensitive matters in the way the *Tsokha* desired.

The Leader, having eliminated the Left and Right Oppositions or reduced their relics to cringing subservience, was poised to launch a fresh assault on his hard-pressed subjects, who under the New Economic Policy (NEP) had just started to recover from the last bout of bloodletting. In the winter of 1929–30, "dizzy with success", he began to force the peasant smallholders to join collective farms which lacked the most elementary prerequisites for success. Those who resisted, and some who did not, were labelled *kulaks* and despatched to the Gulag. The man-made famine of 1933–4 swept away millions more. As de Jonge points out, the tragedy was not only inhuman but unnecessary, since the peasants would have gladly marketed their surplus grain had they been offered a reasonable price. But Soviet Communists had been indoctrinated to look on prosperous peasants as "dark, unenlightened, embryonic capitalists" and ideology required their "liquidation" irrespective of the social or economic cost.

Stalin recedes from view at this point. Seldom appearing in public, he quietly plotted revenge upon all those – managers, specialists, Party apparatchiki and even secret policemen – who might be tempted to doubt the correctness of his general line. He had to bide his time, and

the Great Purge did not get under way until 1936. De Jonge spares his readers none of its horrors, from the pre-dawn arrests through interrogation by torture, the Lubyanka cellars, convict trains, life (or more usually, death) in the camps, to Western gullibility. Do we need to be told all this again? Yes, evidently we do. A correspondent to a well-known weekly last September, writing from tranquil Cumbria, maintains that "no one who reads the transcript of [Bukharin's] trial... could seriously doubt the basic integrity of the trial proceedings". So much for Khrushchev and the Twentieth Party Congress.

Then there were the "revisionists", mainly American academics, who would have us believe that the 1930s saw the genesis of a new, more stable legal order and that the scope of the terror has been exaggerated. It is a pity de Jonge does not consider these arguments. He offers no composite statistics on the toll of victims; nor does he grapple with the thesis, familiar to undergraduates for the past twenty years, that one should distinguish between "necessary" and "unnecessary" excesses. Intellectuals (not only Russian ones) are repeatedly berated here for naïveté, arrogance, or the pursuit of utopian fantasies learned about in books, and urged to display more practical common sense. One sees what he means, but this is too simple an analysis for the barbs to strike home. Stalin, for one, had plenty of common sense.

Another target is the Foreign Office during the difficult years of the Grand Alliance. Anthony Eden is indicted for "his passionate support for the Soviet Union", allegedly dating from 1935; for slapping the wrists of any official who criticized Stalin; and for letting the Big

Thief "run rings round him" and Churchill's October 1944. Some (named) junior officials have their reputations smeared.

There are three things to be said here. First, the Foreign Secretary's attitude shifted markedly early in 1944, at which time he wrote (in a minute not cited here), "I confess to growing apprehension that Russia has vast aims and these may include the domination of Eastern Europe." Second, his earlier efforts to appease Stalin's susceptibilities, notably over Soviet horders, made no impact whatever on the Russians, who suspected him of trying to keep them out of the European peace settlement. Third, British policy has to be judged in historical context. Public opinion was understandably pro-Soviet at a time when the Red Army was bearing the brunt of the struggle. British power was melting daily; only the United States could right the balance, but Roosevelt was far more willing to indulge Uncle Joe's whims than the British.

Certainly, regrettable errors were made; but it was not easy to be the reluctant associate of an ogre keen to exploit his partner's every weakness. Hitler was in the saddle; Stalin might have concluded a separate peace; the Alliance was a marriage of convenience in which some concessions were inevitable; the Western governments and publics hoped that the tenuous war-time co-operation should continue after victory was common sense. Alas, de Jonge implies that the Alliance itself was mistaken; but without it he would not have been able to write his informative and entertaining book. It does not radically change our picture of Stalin, but gains much from the use of dissenters' memoirs published in the West since his death.

## KGB.

Elena Bonner describes her months in the United States as "a highlight of my entire life". It is interesting to see what struck her as she travelled around the country after recovering from open-heart surgery. She was amused by the jogging craze ("Do people ever walk here?"), delighted by the December Christmas shopping spree, and charmed by American warmth and openness; she loved the attachment to privacy and independence. She has no use for émigré nostalgia and with a refreshing lack of sentimentality says "birch trees can grow everywhere".

Bonner is not a political person, however, and certain judgments are too simple (Americans care mainly about owning a house, egg they do not want war). Disagreement about the best way to help Sakharov led her at times to contentious encounters with human rights advocates and government officials. She is understandably sarcastic in her account of the backstairs meeting at the White House with Admiral Poindexter, but her contempt for quiet diplomacy, "the 'double think' of polite protests behind closed doors" is too sweeping. Surely it is the combination of public protest and private remonstrance that has often proved the most effective.

*Alone Together* was written in three months in extraordinary circumstances. The tension is always present between the author's exhilaration at writing in freedom, and the ticking of the clock, the inevitable date of departure for Gorky ("everything inside me turns to stone with fear"). The translation by Alexander Cook (which faithfully captures Mrs Bonner's voice) and the editing were also done under pressure, with the result that the chronicle suffers from confusing disjunctions. Fortunately there are useful notes about persons mentioned in the text as well as an important collection of documents in the appendix, but an editor's introduction would have been helpful for the general reader.

Andrei Sakharov has not been silenced. Elena Bonner tells us that despite repeated confiscations, he managed to complete his own memoirs and get them to the West before her arrival. "Andrei has a talent to finish what he starts." The real question, though, is whether a great country is going to continue to treat one of its most talented citizens in such a sordid and contemptible manner. More is at stake than the fate of one man.

# The pains of genius

## Stuart Sutherland

AMY WALLACE  
The Prodigy: A Biography of William James Sidis, the world's greatest childhood prodigy  
297pp. Macmillan. £10.95.  
0333432231

Childhood geniuses rarely fulfil the expectations of their proud parents: John Stuart Mill and Norbert Wiener, the founder of cybernetics, were exceptions. William James Sidis, who derived his Christian names from his father's friend and mentor, was not. Born in New York in 1898 of Russian émigré parents, he could read at eighteen months and by four had mastered Greek sufficiently to follow Homer, or so Amy Wallace informs us in *The Prodigy*. Unfortunately, this information comes largely from an unpublished book written by William's mother long after his death and should be treated with suspicion. The events of William's later childhood do, however, suggest that he was extraordinarily clever. His father claims to have taught him to reason, not to master facts, and he was largely self-taught. He lectured to the Harvard Mathematical Club at the age of twelve with such originality that according to the *New York Times* "he made the professors gasp". He graduated from Harvard with an undistinguished degree, merely *cum laude* not *magna cum laude* let alone *summa cum laude*. This failure disgusted his mother, but it probably did not worry William, for he regarded

universities with disdain. He taught mathematics for a short time at Rice Institute and having embarked on a postgraduate course at Harvard abandoned it before taking his degree.

Although he apparently had an excellent grasp of physics, mathematics, geology, law, economics, and the impact of Red Indians on American society, he subsequently foreswore all overt expression of his intellectual interests and lived in obscurity working as the operator of an early form of calculator. He was so proficient that one of his supervisors thought he must be carrying out the calculations in his head, a suspicion that was never verified. As soon as a firm discovered William's real talents or found out who he was, he moved to another position.

He became an eccentric. Although he had many friends, he dressed badly, was awkward and abrupt in society and had curious eating habits. When eating a main course, he would consume in succession the meat, the potatoes and each of the other vegetables in turn; on being offered a cake he thought nothing of eating half of it himself, leaving the remainder for the other guests. He invented a new hobby, the collection and study of transfers – slips of paper issued by American municipal transport systems that enable the passenger to transfer to another bus or subway without paying an additional fare. He wrote a book on the topic and founded a magazine, called *The Peridromophile*, his name for the transfer collector. In his pamphlet on *The Code of Ethics for Transfer Collectors*, he makes it clear that it is legitimate to collect transfers that have been discarded and elsewhere he gives advice on how

to recover and preserve them after they have been buried in snow.

Amy Wallace claims that William was naïve, but the evidence for this is slight. True, he wrote rather pompous instructions to himself in early adolescence, including a resolution, which he kept, never to drink, smoke, or consort with women, but many people are pompous or priggish at that age and some might regard his maxims as extremely sensible. Moreover, he showed more common sense than many others, when, after becoming associated with the Communist Party, he repudiated it a few months later in disgust at Lenin's repressive measures.

*The Prodigy* raises two interesting questions. First, how does a child become a prodigy? The answer would appear to be a combination of aptitude and a parent with intellectual interests and the capacity and patience to pass them on to his child at an early age. Wiener, Mozart and Mill are examples. Although the talent must be there, it need not necessarily be completely out of the ordinary. After all, many small boys with an interest in professional football acquire a knowledge of the subject merely as a result of the time they spend thinking about it, time which had it been devoted to history might have made them formidable historians. Moreover, mystery of a subject depends as much on pondering it in one's leisure hours as on formal study, and as a child William Sidis devoted most of his spare time to intellectual pursuits – so much so that he did not learn to tie his shoelaces until adolescence.

The other question is why child prodigies rarely do anything outstanding as adults. In William's case, the answer is clear. As a boy he was continually mocked by the press, and indeed by many of his acquaintances. When he taught at Rice, women would tease him by pretending to have fallen in love with him. He was subsequently quoted by a newspaper as saying, "They flirt too much.... But I am lippy to say that Article 22 of my constitution

which prohibits kissing or familiarity with females is still unblemished". Newspapers repeatedly invaded his privacy and distorted the facts. It was reported, for example, that he had had a nervous breakdown when he was merely suffering from a cold, a myth repeated years later by James Thurber in the *New Yorker*. His experiences with the press were exacerbated by the folly of his father in publishing, when Billy was only thirteen, a book on how to bring up a genius. The only way in which William could avoid ridicule was to live in obscurity at the expense of pursuing his intellectual interests in public; and this is precisely what he did.

In William's case, there may have been a second reason for his failure to fulfil his early talent. His sister wrote of their mother, "She criticised me all the time, found fault in everything I did. You could never do anything right with my mother, she was a perfectionist." Maybe William's refusal to exploit his ability was a deliberate rebellion against his ghastly mother, who had shown him off like a pet when he was a child, or maybe he felt he could never live up to her expectations and the best solution was not to try. More generally, anyone who is outstandingly clever when young is likely to arouse exaggerated expectations in others and may later be tempted to opt out because he feels he can never fulfil them.

Finally, everyone is constrained by the limitations of time. Anyone who devotes his youth solely to intellectual pursuits is likely to learn little of other aspects of life. William was gauche and seems, at least when young, to have had little understanding of others. Such understanding is necessary in almost any position, and his lectures at Rice appear to have been disastrous. It is not clear that he could have survived even in what many people wrongly think of as the cloistered life of a university.

Be that as it may, Amy Wallace has written an interesting and, in places, moving account of his life, which should be pondered by anyone thinking of raising a genius.

## Airs and Graces

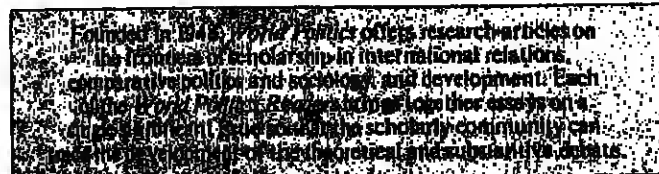
Nine times out of ten he'd be complaining and the tenth condemning neighbours' stock or the way they kept their fences. Or he'd be crowing about something of his own. A cut above buttermilk, cock of the walk – his geese were swans apparently. The harvest moon perched in his pear tree.

He went astray one winter. They started soon to say he's short of the full shilling. And someone said he'd take so much in his stride he hadn't feet on the ground at all. A head in the clouds, from which advantage he could see no more or the next man, a world through other. When pressed he'd say, if it's not one thing, it's another.

The night he struck the woman of the house, and shut her in the meal shed they had it from the daughters. He'd taken them to bed once and again, and one conceived. The doctor came and called the guards. A cousin came to help start the milking machine and stayed to finish foddering. There was no moon. The stars were few and far between.

PETER FALLON

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# Through the minefield

Michael Crick

MARTIN ADENEY and JOHN LLOYD  
The Miners' Strike 1984-5: Loss without limit  
224pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95.  
0710210694  
IAN MACGREGOR  
The Enemies Within: The story of the miners' strike 1984-5  
384pp. Collins. £15.00.  
0002177064

It was the *Daily Express* which first talked of the "enemy within" in a front-page headline about Arthur Scargill in August 1983, eight months before the miners' strike began. Mrs Thatcher took up the term a year later at a meeting of hunched Tory MPs, comparing the striking miners with General Galtieri. But Ian MacGregor's "enemies within" were not so much Scargill and the National Union of Mineworkers, but the whole political "establishment" he had to huddle with during the long months of the dispute.

MacGregor came to the job at Hobart House hostile to the "cosy relationship" he felt previous Coal Board Officials, politicians and civil servants had built up with the mining unions. (Scargill was equally opposed to this collaborative relationship.) Prime examples of the "united world" MacGregor hated so much were Ned Smith, the Coal Board's Industrial Relations Director, and Geoff Kirk, Head of Public Relations. Both were suspected of being Labour supporters, and both simply got on too well with the NUM and the media. Both were to take early retirement during the strike because their relations with MacGregor deteriorated so much. Even Michael Eaton, the man brought in to be the Board's spokesman during the latter stages of the strike, came to be regarded by MacGregor as too "soft" and out of his depth. But MacGregor's deepest contempt is for the Energy Secretary, Peter Walker, with whom relations became so bad that Walker was holding secret meetings with the TUC without even informing the Coal Board Chairman of the fact.

MacGregor was a lonely figure inside Hobart House. His only real friends, it seems, were the Deputy Chairman, James Cowan, whose extensive knowledge of coal provided MacGregor with a "window on the industry", and two outsiders brought in by MacGregor as advisers, Tim Bell of Saatchi and Saatchi, and the mysterious David Hart.

Hart's role in the coal dispute has never been fully explained. MacGregor fills us in on some of the details, while Martin Adeney and John Lloyd's excellent *The Miners' Strike 1984-5* certainly tells us more about the man than was known before. Hart, a millionaire land-owner and occasional adviser to Mrs Thatcher, had been drawn into the dispute after visiting Nottinghamshire to write about the working miners for his column in *The Times*. The strike was four months old when he first approached MacGregor, after deliberately going to a party in the knowledge that the Coal Board chairman would be there. Within a few months Hart was installed inside MacGregor's office and was sometimes acting as if he himself were the chairman. According to Adeney and Lloyd, for instance, Hart, along with Tim Bell, made the choice of Michael Eaton as NCB spokesman, after watching various candidates' past television performances on a video. MacGregor says Hart gave him a valuable "non-NCB dimension" to the dispute. Perhaps most important, though, was Hart's work in organizing the working miners. It was he who hired a

helicopter to carry the important writ served on Arthur Scargill during the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool. Above all Hart devised the "Gulliver concept", whereby the working miners' legal actions were meant to tie down the mighty NUM with ropes, sapping the union of its energy, money and morale.

Overall, MacGregor's ghost-written memoirs tell us more about him than the strike. Sadly, he shows no appreciation of why so many miners should have been prepared to strike for so long. Reading his account, one would think he had never visited a mining community, never spoken to a striking miner. For MacGregor the dispute was viewed in pure business terms. The only sign of concern about unemployment comes in his account of life on Clydeside in the 1930s. For MacGregor the miners' strike of 1984-5 was simply Scargill's strike; the miners were being led astray by one man.

Fortunately, Adeney and Lloyd show it was nothing like as simple as that. The coal dispute has already resulted in more than a dozen books, and theirs is by far the most comprehensive. The authors have exploited every scrap of available material, not carried out many valuable interviews since the strike ended, and their contacts have been able to be much more open. Their book is well written, good on analysis, and remarkably fair, though perhaps a touch too earnest. They have not discovered anything which is dramatically new, but that would have been difficult in a field which so many journalists have already been working. Nevertheless, they fill in many of the small gaps in our existing knowledge; particularly revealing is their section on how the power stations kept going.

In the next century historians yet to be born will no doubt resist the evidence, work through the Cabinet papers and Scargill archives, and come up with new detail and interpretations of the strike. In the meantime we await Scargill's own many-volumed account.

## Living the strike

Mervyn Jones

TONY PARKER  
Red Hill  
196pp. Heinemann. £9.95.  
0434577715

Red Hill - an invented name, but recognizable by anyone who knows the Durham coalfield - is a pit that employed 3,000 miners at the time of nationalization in 1947. By the 1980s, some seams had been exhausted and the payroll was down to 800, but the reserves of coal were considerable and men had been transferred from other pits as they were closed. Rumours that Red Hill might be closed too were heard in the later months of the 1984-5 strike; indeed it was closed after Tony Parker had recorded the interviews that fill this book. As elsewhere, the closure was a death sentence on a community. The people of the village will always regard it as unjustified, and believe that it was an act of revenge for Red Hill's strike record.

Roads of Parker's other books will be familiar with his technique: he meets a variety of men and women, he records what they say, he presents it with a minimum of visual description (sometimes the individual's appearance and clothes, sometimes the house and furnishings) and without editorial comment. The technique demands skill and sensitivity. In shaping the interview with questions and suggestions, and later with arranging and cutting,

# Anterior questions

David Carlton

BERNARD ELBAUM and WILLIAM LAZONICK (Editors)  
The Decline of the British Economy  
310pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.  
0193284942

This collection of essays on the long-term decline of the British economy will not be welcomed by those who place their faith in Margaret Thatcher's supposedly radical prescriptions for providing a remedy. As the editors put it in their introduction:

The monetarist policies of the Thatcher government have failed to address the problem of economic development. Invoking free market ideology, Thatcher has attacked the power of the unions and sought economic revival through the severity of market discipline. But the supposition that there are forces latent in Britain's "free market" economy that will return the nation to prosperity finds little confirmation in historical experience.

The origins of this book lie in the research undertaken by the editors when graduate students in economics at Harvard University. William Lazonick studied the development of the British cotton industry while Bernard Elbaum focused on iron and steel. They both became convinced that the "dynamic interaction between structures of industrial organization and industrial relations formed the core of the explanation of the development process". It was then but a short step to bring together in Boston a number of like-minded North Americans who were specialists on other British industries (most notably shipbuilding and motor-vehicles) or who had expert knowledge of such topics as technical education, industrial research, regional policies and the role of the City of London. The result is a work of greater coherence than would normally be expected from twelve contributors. At the same time, it

is perhaps a weakness that the editors did not ask a single adherent of other schools of economic thought to present a reasoned critique of the central theses.

What arguments would the author of such a critique have to address? First might come the editors' bold proclamation that "Britain was impeded from making a successful transition to mass production and corporate organization in the twentieth century by an indelible nineteenth-century institutional legacy of atomistic economic organization." Most Thatcherites would presumably disagree and they would reject the suggested retrospective remedy, namely a rigorous increase in the role of the State in industrial matters. For is it not supposed to be the principal source of our problems? But, according to Elbaum and Lazonick, the British State has actually been anything but *dirigiste* in the matter of industrial policy. Even when industries have been nationalized, radical interference of the kind seen in post-1945 France has generally been avoided. And even Labour governments have been essentially reactionary in their industrial policies by having had, as their first priority, the maintenance (or even the restoration) of traditional trade union privileges which have done untold harm to the cause of industrial competitiveness.

The editors of this stimulating and significant volume also force the reader to think again about the importance of alleged failures of various governments to judge demand-management issues wisely. They see little evidence of unusually severe cyclical fluctuation affecting the British performance. "On the contrary", they write, "Britain's relative decline has persisted through enough cyclical up and downs to indicate that its roots lie deeper than inappropriate macro-economic management."

Likewise, one needs, after reading this book, to look again at wider cultural explanations of British decline, pioneered by Martin Wiener in his *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (1981), as well as at the more eccentric theses about the alleged domestic misdeeds of Winston Churchill's war-time government recently canvassed by Correlli Barnett (and the subject of acrimonious correspondence in recent issues of this journal). The telling point is made that if twentieth-century British society was pervaded by conservative mores, "it was in this respect no worse off than Japan or continental European countries that were pre-capitalist, tradition-bound societies when Britain was the workshop of the world". Elbaum and Lazonick continue: "The thesis of entrepreneurial failure, and other culturally based explanations of decline, shed no light on why Britain was less successful than later industrializers in remoulding customary attitudes that encumbered economic performance."

In short, in these debates about British decline we seem to be led to examine one anterior question after another. What will next become fashionable in this respect? How about asking whether the British nation as a whole in the last century has not simply mutated into Yahoo!

Such numbers as largely to explain everything else - not least our inability to compete economically with superior peoples? Maybe, then, Elbaum and Lazonick should make their next research trip to the holiday beaches of Spain or, even better, to the criminal courts in Bristol where allegations will be heard against our compatriots on the subject of the worst conduct ever seen at a sporting occasion involving supposedly civilized countries. But beyond that is yet another anterior question: if we have indeed become the savages of contemporary Europe how is that in its turn to be explained?

*Speculators and Politicos: Essays in business biography* edited by R. T. P. Davenport-Hines (139pp. Cass. £21. 0 7146 3301 1) includes a chapter by Dilwyn Porter on Harry Marks and the *Financial News* 1884 - 1916, John A. Strong on Hooley and the Bovril Company, Terence Rogers on Sir Alan Smith, the Industrial Group and the Politics of Unemployment 1919 - 24 and contributions from Robert Turrell, Pat Thane, Hugo Hines and Davenport-Hines in collaboration with James

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# Nobody, or a nation

Lachlan Mackinnon

DEREK WALCOTT  
Collected Poems 1948-1984  
516pp. Faber. £20.  
0571138459  
PAULA BURNETT (Editor)  
The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse in English  
447pp. Penguin. £4.95.  
0140585117

The first black poet in what Paula Burnett, the editor of *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse in English*, calls "the literary tradition" of Caribbean verse, Francis Williams, survives in his "Ode to George Haldane, Governor of the Island of Jamaica" as a Latin poet of considerable wit - his Latin is explained by his education at Cambridge as the object of a philanthropic experiment. The ode is dated about 1759, and in the extract that Burnett prints the poet asks

Cut meas, quamvis, dubhesve, nigerrima celsam  
Caesaris occidit, scander: Musa domum?

"Why do you fear so much, and hesitate, my Muse so black, to mount to the lofty abode of the Caesar of the setting sun?" (Burnett's translation). Williams later refers to himself in the accusative as "Maurum", a Moor, which gives the Caesar's Westernness an ironic tinge.

Free-born himself, Williams remembers how his people came to Jamaica, which is western to him, and, as Burnett points out, "occidit" also carries the sense of "falling", it may be that Williams meant to intimate the inevitable doom of empire. In his historical predicament, landscape and even astronomy are politicized, a thread which runs through almost all the verse, whatever its author's race, that Burnett collects. It is not, therefore, surprising that when we turn to Derek Walcott's autobiographical verse-novel *Another Life* (1973) we find the poet inviting himself to

Begin with twilight, when a glare  
which held a cry of bugles lowered

the cocoanut lances of the inferi,  
as a sun, tired of empire, declined.

The bugles and lances are British, but the subtle hint of decadence in "declined" also reflects Walcott's troubled view of his own mixed ancestry, and that the irony should be so closely related to Williams's may not be entirely accidental. Walcott is steeped in literature - academic success was what first enabled him to leave St Lucia for a wider world, about which he is still ambivalent - and in his own culture, as the success of many of his "oral" poems shows.

For the young Walcott literature was doubly alienating. On the one hand, there were the objects loved by his dead father, a water-colourist,

the stuffed dark nightingale of Keats,  
bead-eyed, snow-headed eagles,  
all that romantic landscape,  
and each one was a fragment of the True Cross,  
each one upheld, as if it were The Host.

On the other, there was the "new Word" which found "the natural man" in the wild. "I looked from the bus window", Walcott writes,

and multiplied the bush with savages,  
speckled the leaves with jaguar and deer,  
I changed those crusted boulders to grey, stone-  
tided crocodiles,  
my head shrieked with metallic, ravenous parrots,  
I held my breath as savages grinned,  
stalking through the bush.

Of this childhood, Walcott reminds us that "years must pass before he saw an orchestra / a train, a theatre, the spark-coloured leaves / of autumn whirling from a rail line", and in it he sees power and ignominy. English literature is stuffed and inert, but the Rousseauistic side of Romanticism, reflected in popular fiction, liberates the transforming power of the imagination only to reduce, demean and miss the real. A moment of personal vision and a friendship led him to understand and name the particular, at first by painting.

Where did I fall? I could draw.  
I was disciplined, humble, I rendered  
the visible world that I saw

exactly, yet it hindered me, for  
in every surface I sought  
the paradoxical flash of an instant  
in which every facet was caught  
in a crystal of ambiguities.

The shift to poetry was inevitable.

The line I have quoted from *Another Life* illustrates the strengths and risks of Walcott's style, which is pitched much higher than that of any of his English contemporaries. He can achieve unusual grandeur, but can also bathetically overwrite. In a poem dedicated to Joseph Brodsky, "Forest of Europe" (1979), Walcott describes his dedicatee memorably as "a man living with English in one room" and snys of Mandelstam that

He saw the poetry in forlorn stations  
under clouds vast as Asia, through districts  
that could gulp Oklahoma like a grape.

Walcott's imaginative reach is compelling, but the blank assertion that "there is no harder prison than writing verse" feels a little self-indulgent, particularly from one who wonders "what's poetry, if it is worth its salt, / but a phrase men can pass from hand to mouth?" Walcott's career-long insistence on the necessity of poetry is, like Brodsky's, what we most need to hear. It is a pity that he tries to parallel Caribbean and Gullug archipelagos, because what he really has in common with Brodsky is the marginal status of exile. In the end, each lives alone with his language.

It is therefore fitting that "The Castaway" (1965) should be the first poem in this massive selection (Walcott has excluded a fair amount of his work) in which his characteristic tone is mastered. Two lines: "The starved eye devours the seascape for the morsel / Of a sail". The prosodic freedom works for emphasis, is a discipline. The next line, "The horizon threads it infinitely", is ambiguous, as one wonders whether the horizon threads a sail (implicitly like Penelope), the seascape or the lacerated eye. Mixed metaphors pull together into desolation. "The Castaway" is the first poem really to work as a whole; the earlier poems are

recognizable stylistically, but veer between gross overwriting ("the profound cigarette") and fragmentation. Sonnets in particular lend Walcott to a sonorous vacuity. The struggle between the riveting, isolated phrase and overall control has dogged his whole career, a heroic effort to master tumultuous gifts.

"Schizophrenic, wrencht by two styles, / one a hack's hired prose, I earn / my exile" Walcott says in "Codicil" (from *The Castaway and Other Poems*). Economic independence means dependence, for Walcott as for St Lucia, and he is torn between knowing that "To change your language you must change your life" and that "I cannot right old wrongs". He understands Auden's dictum that poetry makes nothing happen, which is what elevates his work above the ultimately and tragically disabling *parti pris* nature of most of Paula Burnett's compilation. He also knows that the origin of poetry is oral (Homer is probably the author he cites most frequently) and some of his best work has been in a regional vernacular.

Burnett's informative and intriguing book is marred by its separation of oral from literary material, because the very act of printing oral material gives it the permanence of the literary, and a more interesting picture of the dialectic between essentially colonized and imperial modes of language which still persists but is most astonishingly evident in the eighteenth century would have been conveyed by amalgamating the two. Walcott's poem "The Spoiler's Return" (1981), which Burnett reprints and glosses, uses an oral persona (Theophilus Phillip, "The Mighty Spoiler", was a calypso writer who died in 1959) to say, "I see these islets and I feel to bawl, / 'orea of darkness' with V. S. Nightfall". The poem is not wholly successful, but the Spoiler's plea

so back me up, Old Brigade of Saire,  
back me up, Martini, Jenever, and Pope  
(to hang theirself I giving plenty rope),  
join Spoiler's chorus, sing the song with me,  
Lord Rochester, who praised the nimble flew  
shows its ambitions. Walcott claims the heroic couplet for the dispossessed, for he knows that

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language is an instrument of power and must therefore be seized, and he gives his character his own confident assumption of a place in world culture.

Walcott evidently believes that to assume such a place the tradition, however defined, must live in his work. Often it does. In *Midsummer*, L (1984), he claims that

These poems I heaved aren't linked in any tradition like a mossed cairn; each goes down like a stone to the seabed, settling, but let them, with luck, lie where stones are deep, in the sea's memory.

What he lays claim to is a tradition older than tradition, a poetry rooted in nature, almost Shakespearean, as in *Midsummer*, XXXVI. Here, the scene is Warwickshire, for which Walcott surmises his father Warwick may have been named, and a pith with "white-haired regulars" so deaf they can't tell whether what they hear is "the drone of the abbeys" or "a chain saw working late". Then we find "four old men" in the pith garden, talking about "bows" and "wenches". Walcott remembers hearing "their old talk carried / through cables laid across the Atlantic bed", and can "trot their names / like familiars".

Because the worm that cores the rotting apple of the world and the horse's chain saw cannot touch the words of Shallow or Silence in their fuding garden.

This astonishing ending explains why the men's "maker granted them a primal pardon". It is carefully prepared for, so that it is both startling and inevitable, the diminuendo of the two lines beginning "of" playing down its bravura.

The problem is that Walcott's cosmopolitan ambition can lead to rootlessness, as he knows. The unhappy Stalinism of my phrasing perhaps reveals the poverty of this as a complaint: to have been rendered almost unrecognizable by the influence of Robert Lowell, as in much of *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981), is hardly shameful. Lowell's voice in the 1970s was as persuasively that of his time as Auden's in the 1930s, and as compulsive. It is, indeed, testimony to Lowell's power that so fine a poet as Walcott should have suffered from the epidemic of influence, and *Midsummer* testifies to an almost complete recovery by assimilation.

Walcott's uneven prolificness is perplexing and enviable. His purest success is "The Schooner Flight", a sequence in which he adopts the persona of the sailor Shabine. Joseph Brodsky, again, has pointed to the daring of the lines

I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,  
I had a sound colonial education.

I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me, and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation.

As Brodsky says, "When you hear such a voice, you know: the world unravels." "Shabine sang to you from the depths of the sea", the sequence ends, and Walcott is right. As a later poem in the same volume, *The Salt-Apple Kingdom*, has it, "The sea is History".

Where is your tribal memory? Sirs, in that grey vault. The sea. The sea has locked them up.

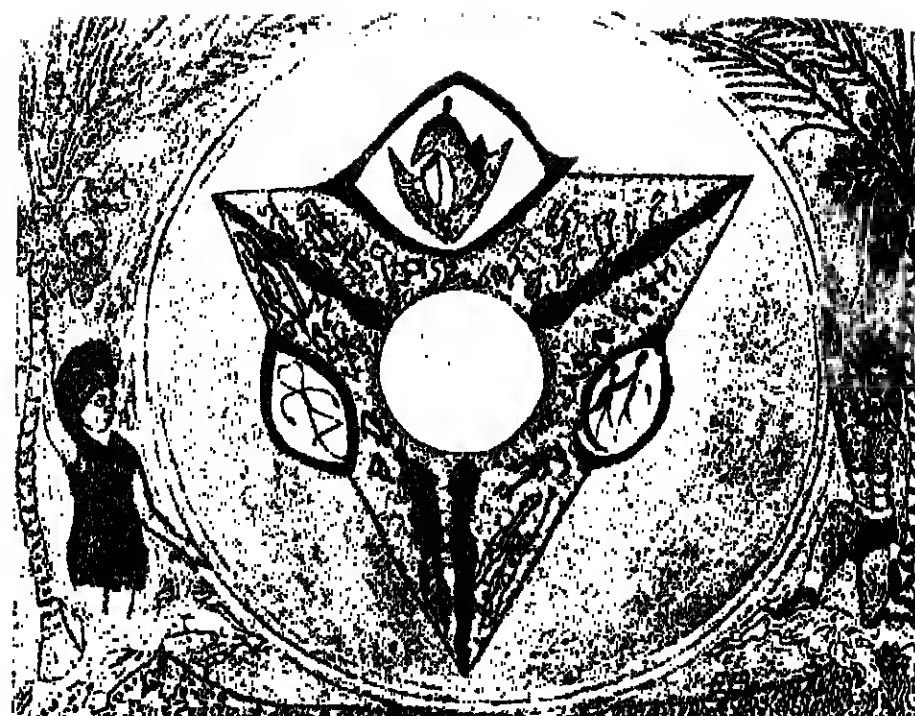
Brodsky has argued that only "bacon-lined retinae" and racism have prevented Walcott from being acknowledged "the great poet of the English language". The variety and beauty of this volume will convince all but the most pigheaded of what many—more, anyway than Brodsky supposes—have suspected. Walcott is not entirely without peers, but he has very few. He is not a local poet, and the problem may have been that one must see his work whole to appreciate this fully. This book is a triumph which bears its scars proudly: Walcott speaks with and for humanity when he tells his first love, become a nurse, that "No woman should read verse / twenty years into. You go about your calling, canille-like", a calm moment in his discovery and revelation of *Another Life*.

## Bold survivor

Carol Rumens

E. A. MARKHAM  
*Living in Disguise*  
120pp. Anvil Press. £10.95 (paperback £5.95).  
0856461725  
Something Unusual  
106pp. Ambit. Paperback, £3.95.  
0900055030

E. A. Markham has always enjoyed the camouflage effects offered by pseudonyms and personae: in his new volume *Living in Disguise*, besides Lambchops (perennially young and shrewd of wit) and his senior alter ego, Philpot, we meet Sally Goodman, "creator" of the aggrieved though glancingly satirical feminist sequence "The Housewife's Revenge". But the disguise and counter-disguises go deeper than role-play in a writer inheriting so many cultural filters—themselves often disguised as layers of irony. Markham emigrated from Mootserratt in the 1950s, while still in his teens, and completed his education in England; he has travelled widely in Europe and beyond, and been variously employed as a lecturer, teacher, theatre director, editor and media coordinator. Such a multi-faceted exile has pro-



Everald Brown's "Dread Nui", 1976, is on show at the Wolverhampton Art Gallery until November 11 in the exhibition *Jamaican Intuities: Visionary paintings and sculpture direct from Jamaica*.

vided him with the material for a poetic self-image more complex than that of the alien in Babylon moved by yearnings for his West Indian, ultimately African, roots. He is not, as a result, much given to the use of dialect; instead he has forged for himself a fresh, original voice out of Standard English. Engagingly, he depicts the immigrant writer gazing wryly up at "The Language", a monolith that was "alive before God / its monuments more solid than mountains / which separate family from family". "Only the bold survive this tongue", the narrator comments in "Sojourn in a Second Language".

Markham is indeed a bold writer. He eschews conceits and decorative effects and rarely wastes an adjective; if he uses rhymes they are mostly couplets, but he usually gets by without, and his forms, like his language, have an inner energy and sinuousness that make up for lack of symmetry. A thinker rather than a describer, who credits the reader with an intelligence equal to his own, he has developed into a political writer in the best (not necessarily wisest) sense. No mere polemicist, he is a debater with himself and whatever segment of society has engaged him. One of the longest and most ambitious poems in the volume, called, with tongue in cheek, "On the Redis-

tribution of Wealth", offers, among other sprightly examples of dialectic, a consideration of the rights and wrongs of private ownership inspired by the theft of the narrator's shirt. "It's a small matter of things / well then, let it go. To say / they have mocked my choice / I can put weight on a skeleton not built for it" he wisely decides, but imagination pursues him with the vision of an "unwashed Kanaka" (a bushman) tearing off the shirt with threat of rape, and he concludes that, despite the view of the "Neanderthals of politics", possession, even lost ones, can help give definition to life. "No longer friends rewriting the past / with new partners, new jokes / are still part of what makes sense in the balanced / margins of an account. / Yes, it matters who wears my shirt". In another substantial sequence, "Four Letters and a Sermon", the poet writes to his dead grandmother from Papua New Guinea, offering, in the process, the familiar Portrait of the Artist as a Disappointment to his family, but with an unusual slant. Rather than having to account to Father, as in the European version, the West Indian boy has to measure up to an elderly matriarch whom he remembers not by her smile but by "that guarded look" which convicted him of "what the French call frigade". We are subsequently transported into pre-history to meet the original of such disappointing children, together with the original political line: "The Boy / First hunter in the family to fail, / letting the wild boar escape again and again. / Then with the wrong tools, trapping / the beast on the wall of our cave, / the feeble stupid, crazy thing in the world." Markham's is a different poet, but these "grandmother poems" blend his more meditative and allusive style with the direct, straight-talking manner of "Lambchops", suggesting that the epistolary genre could bear much fruitful exploration.

It is a pity in some ways that the collection of short stories, *Something Unusual*, could not have been published with *Living in Disguise* as one volume. Certainly the short stories help bring the poetry into clearer focus for the English reader; they illuminate at ground-level certain important areas on which Markham's poetic ladders are raised, and several amplify the character of the ubiquitous, but somewhat until now slightly nebulous, figure of Philpot. They also extend the notion of living in (various) disguises. Many are linked, with characters moving in and out of each other's narratives (and shoes), in a way more entertaining and less pretentious than it sounds. Those collected in this section called "The Montserrat Connection" struck me as particularly effective, at least on a first reading. "The Pig was Mine", "Self-Addressed Envelope", and, most immediate and sympathetic of all, "Mammie's Form at the Post Office", a story which, describing the comedy of difficulties facing an old woman trying to send a hundred dollars home to the West Indies, presents a vignette of the small, mean face of Bank bureaucracy that is, alas, instantly recognizable, and authentic.

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## The life of the political past

Richard Deveson

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A country doesn't, of course, necessarily become independent by becoming independent; and in the same way it is hard for the literature of an ex-colony to avoid being ex-colonial. The political past lives on, a factor in the intellectual present. The writer is very likely an exile, in Europe or America—at any rate an advance guard of decolonization, an outsider looking in. And yet the past has receded all the same, and the writer, besides looking in, may also turn out to be looking back. Separation, if it isn't turned to artistic account, can breed both nostalgia and distress.

All four of the new and nearly-new novels in the present batch from Heinemann's Caribbean Writers series are concerned, in one way or another, with the past. Some are more in its thrall than others. One of the attractions of Zee Edgell's first novel, *Beka Lamb* (which shared the Fawcett Society Book Prize in 1982), is that it aims straightforwardly to put on record a time and a place and a group of people: the life of a creole family in Belize City at the end of the Second World War. In Gordillo's *Grocery and Dry Goods Store* "the smell of kerosene, onions, cheese and briny pickles made the shop stink". The family's garden is filled with roses, maidenhair ferns, bushy crotonas, oleander, stephanotis, bougainvillea, "red hibiscus flowers with their tongues hanging out". For meals there are yams, red acappas stewed in coconut milk, corn tortillas and black beans, chilies, escabeche soup. It is

perfectly all right to enjoy the exoticism of all this, while acknowledging that for the author its meaning is very different.

Beka Lamb's story is the characteristic Caribbean one of the bright child who grows up and away from her family. But the other attractive feature of the novel is that Beka's growing-up, less characteristically, happens without causing virulent conflict or alienation. She is a dreamy child; her family is happy; the womenfolk are dominant, but her father is also decent enough. It is Beka's friend Toyey who succumbs to unsmiling pregnancy and insanity—a victim of the blighting of female ambition and hope which Edgell unstridently shows was another of the pervasive charms of the Belize of her childhood.

*Frangipani House* is a new novel, also a first novel, also a prize-winner (in the GLC Black Literature Competition). Beryl Gilroy's heroine, Mama King, is a Guyanese grandmother who has been consigned to an old-age home by her children, selfish émigrés in New York. The home is a prison, ruled by a non-straw wardress, and Mama King, after going through childlessness and despair, escapes from it to join a troop of beggars. Although her flight is not the final resolution of the story, it does end like an attack of wishful symbolism, and there is something forced, generally, about the way in which Mama King is supposed to stand for matriarchal dauntlessness. In the eyes of most of the younger generation, Mann King is the old country; she is the past. The old country is "just pain and hatred of poverty, hardship and useless mud and dung, pain, mosquitoes and old age". This may be selfishness speaking, but with one half of itself the novel doesn't dispute the point. Mama King had two children; like most men in the story, her husband cleared off "when the belly shone". If the men are not violent, they're not around. Yet at the same time the novel seems to want Mama King to stand for the existence of a good past, a lost world of mothers and dependent young children, a provisional moment of inevitability after and before uncertainty and suffering. It wants to see virtue in that oppressive past precisely because courage and struggle were necessary if it was to be survived. Beneath the rightful protest there is a curious undertow of emigrant's regret.

Harold Bascom's *Apata* is also a new novel, also a first novel; it could certainly win a prize for use of capitals. "WHAT THE PEOPLE TALKING LIKE THAT FOR, MAN? BECAUSE THEY MAKING SO MUCH BLASTED NOISE?" But why they also shout in lower case half the time when they get vex? This is a vivid, exuberant story, and an awkward one. It starts as a portrait of Michael Apata, an exceptionally gifted boy from the forests of the Essequibo in British Guiana (this is the 1950s), who goes to school in Georgetown but loses, first, his free place at King's College and then the girlfriend who is bearing his child. He returns to the wilds, becomes embittered and slides into violent crime. The second half of the book, too, slides into an upending cops-and-robbers chase, amply uppeased with "ALERT SECTION

## Sociologic

Where my best mate lived, it was a scruffy dump  
(mind you, the outside lav was a novelty),  
cockroaches scuttled — his mam called it  
"cockroach", gaining an extra syll-thing.

Next door, the whippets shat in the scullery,  
bloke used to smack his wife with a dirty old  
hessian coal-sack, called her "fuck-pig",  
got put in jail when their baby snuffed it.

What you should do was share out the money and  
make some new houses so they'd be comfy and  
teach them to wash to stop their smell and  
show them what fun it was, being humans —

once you could teach them to dislike themselves as you did, then clearly  
things'd be smashing of course — a child of 8 could see that.

PETER READING

THREE . . . OHO TO ALL PARTIES . . .  
CAN YOU SEE HIM, OVER? . . . NO-O-O-O-O!

There is a sense of special pleading about this book. Bascom wants to imply that his protagonist is a victim of white values (the prejudice of the Education Department bureaucrat, the colour snobbery of his girlfriend's mother), but the story itself shows that Michael is also an enemy to himself, and for temperamental rather than politically inherited reasons. Even though (or because) the women are banished to the edges of this lonely, violent, man's universe, they are the people with whom one sympathizes. And setting the novel in the pre-Independence past once again seems like a bid for safety: the white police gun down the black leader who never was. The book closes with a touch of oleah, but magic alone has not proved enough to redeem later Michael Apata from waste.

Earl Loveface is a writer of much greater skill and sophistication. *The Wife of Astonishment*, his fourth novel, first published in 1982, deals with the campaign against the revivalist church in Trinidad towards the end of the Second World War. There is another proud, self-destructive male here — Bolo, the sick-fighter — but, interestingly, he has a counterweight in Bee, the leader of the small, rural Spiritual Baptist church community that is the book's real heroic centre. Loveface presents the Church as the hewer of an authentic black ethos, under threat from "respectable" Christianity; and the conflict between Bolo and Bee concerns the proper way to meet the threat — whether to fight, rendering evil for evil, or to yield, and suffer, but to keep faith and wait for the oppression to lift. After it has seemed that "The Spirit" has been dispelled for ever, the novel ends in hope that it will reappear in transmuted form. And yet, as Bee's wife says: "We is a lot of people but we ain't a people." The good thing about this novel's reversion to the colonial past is its recognition that conquering it will require the cohesion of community

and not (or certainly not only) the seizures of "Spirit".

The four books from Longman belong to the celebrated phase of Caribbean writing that began in the 1950s. Indeed, the stories by the Jamaican Roger Mais — whose novels *The Hills Were Joyful Together*, *Brother Man* and *Black Lightning* all came out between 1953 and 1955 — mainly date from the 1940s, and are only now properly available for the first time, rescued by Kenneth Ramchand from private editions, perished magazines and typescripts. They are a disparate gathering. Several of them are in the grip of a straining, solipsistic abstraction. Others are very plain, patient, detached, proceeding by the accumulation of short cool sentences. Mais covers many themes: black-and-white, male-and-female, poverty, exploitation, the supernatural. Despite the solipsism, he has a delicate respect for the private centres of very varied kinds of other people. The best stories are those in which atmosphere and detachment, personal feeling and universality, are held in balance. A girl leaning on a gte in the moonlight accepts an approach from a stranger; a lonely woman wistfully and a lonely man (again from the darkness) and sings to him; an old man loses his donkey and is left alone with his boy, to face the uncaring city. This last story, "World's End", is outstanding.

Tooth and claw come in for heavy use in *The Children of Sixtyphus* (1964), as the women of Kingston's grisly Dungle bite one another and rip the clothes from their enemies' backs. Meanwhile the Rusta men smoke the "holy herb" and dream of Ethiopia. Orlando Patterson's novel is melodramatic but has become a Jamaican landmark and is well worth reading. *My Bones and My Flute* (1955) is Edgar Mittelholzer up the Berbice River in search of the occult: entertaining enough as the nineteenth-century travel tale that Mittelholzer didn't mean it merely to be. But *In the Castle of My Skin* . . . now that is a novel. It was all here, in Lamming's magnificent picture of a Barbados childhood, back in 1953.

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# Guvvament and the common man

Simon Rae

AUSTIN CLARKE  
Proud Empires  
224pp. Gollancz. £9.95.  
0575 039060

Austin Clarke's new novel is set in the Barbados of the 1950s. Its titular hero, Boy – "MWWT" to his college friends – comes from an impoverished background, but is nevertheless the most promising scholar the island has produced in many a year. The less formal side of his education is taken in hand by Seabert, the local tailor, who promises to initiate him into the adult mysteries of "fooping" women "without nekking them pregnant and with child". In fact, Seabert's main interest is politics, and Boy is regaled with his wide-ranging views on Anarica, Africa, and the contrast between Soviet socialism and English "communism" – Guvvament by the common-man,

for the common-man and with the common-man". Seabert's shop is next door to the rum shop, and the circle of men who frequent both arenas of recreation and debate include Nathan, Boy's illiterate fisherman father, Sarge, the bullying local cop, whose pet "womp" is "a whip made from the penis of a bull-cow", Lionel, the island's dominoes champion, and Manny Batson, the rum shop owner, an enormous man capable of throwing drunks clean through the door and on to the other side of the street.

It is election time, and through the good offices of Mr the Honourable Alexander Bourne, MP, Seabert becomes a candidate for the Guvvament party. He gets a telephone and a Morris Minor which he drives around proudly in first gear. But there is a price to pay for these status symbols, and although Seabert's confessed motivation is uncomplicated – "I am in this for one thing. My personal betterment" – he is not prepared for the extreme demands of party loyalty. Sarge, who favours the Opposition, has a little black book in which are

recorded the multifarious sins of the leading politicians. They want it, at any cost, as the horrified Seabert discovers: "But assassination is murder." "Murder is murder. Assassination is assassination." "But he would be dead!" "As a fucking doornail!"

The campaign is conducted with all the propriety of the Estatesville election, the universal currency of bribery being Fray Bentos corned beef and whisky. When Lionel is killed in a dispute over a game of dominoes, both parties try to make political capital out of it. The Prime Minister attends the funeral, surrounded by his entire cabinet, instructed to "weep like shite" at appropriate places in the service.

However, his chances of retaining power are dashed when a negligent studio manager fails to switch off the mike after an eve-of-poll broadcast. Everyone on the island hears his contemptuous dismissal of "these kiss-me-arse poor people". In the Opposition landslide that follows, Seabert loses his deposit and his Morris Minor. Mr the Honourable Alexander

Bourne loses his seat and his legal immunity, and Sarge, the main prosecution witness against him, helplessly loses his life, and ends up dumped down a well.

It is against this background that Boy's scholarship exams, duly comes top, and elects to study in Canada. As a sort of coda, two short chapters give a glimpse of his four years in Toronto, and his subsequent return in triumph to the island where his great expectations are to be fulfilled, in a career combining the practice of law and the pursuit of political power. This is a rousing note on which to end, but it seems doubtful, in the light of the foregoing exposure of endemic political corruption, whether a callow youth fresh from college will be able to perform the role of reformer and true champion of the common man. Austin Clarke has written a powerful, poignant novel, rich in humour and human sympathy, the strength of which lies in its portrayal of Seabert, Sarge, Nathan and the rest. Earth's proud empires pass away, but the common man remains in his irreducible individuality.

## Voices from within the cage

Anna Vaux

ALBERTO MANGUEL (Editor)  
Other Fires: Stories from the women of Latin America  
222pp. Picador. £3.50.  
0330 28227 X

In Elena Poniatowska's "The Night Visitor", Esmerelda is on trial for bigamy. In fact, she's happily married to five men who are perfectly satisfied with the arrangement by which "Mondays were Pedro's, Tuesdays were Carlo's, and so on . . .". To the Prosecution, indifferent to any practical virtues this role might possess, Esmerelda is not just a case of moral depravity, but of mental illness, and she is condemned as "vicious, degenerate, demented, bestial". Farce and burlesque expose the double standards of a patriarchal legal system which finds Esmerelda guilty although she is morally innocent. And, in true satirical style, her powerful nasivity turns the judgment back on itself: it is not Esmerelda who is on trial, but the society which wants to silence her.

As in those South American law courts which excluded women as suspect witnesses, the testimony of the female voice in the tradition established by Borges and García Márquez has (with the exception of Clarice Lispector) remained practically unheard in English, and several stories in *Other Fires* explore the themes of concealment and imprisonment, both social and linguistic – as though from within the cage itself. Whether to defy or comply with the consensus is the question raised in Lispector's "The Imitation of The Rose", where Laura's recovery from an obscure illness – defined as a feeling of "terrible independence" – is gauged by her ability to stifle and control her impulses in order that her husband should be "finally oblivious" of her. Lispector's questioning style splits the narrative between the first and third person as Laura attempts an impossible balancing act with her divided self.

The quiet horror with which Laura realizes

she must steal back what is hers lies at the centre of the collection. But, rather than forcing an obvious, hard-line feminism, many of the writers here play a subtler game with their sense of exclusion or oppression, often inverting the status quo to exploit the comedy of a pernicious hypocrisy. Armonia Somers skillfully reverses the spiritual and the physical, pushing the Catholic infatuation with the Virgin Mary to its parodic extreme as her protagonist Tristan deflowers the Madonna. It is an amusing idea, but like Poniatowska's, Somers' is an ironic smile.

Less successful, but still effective, is Alejandra Pizarnik's "The Bloody Countess", the "history" of a female Marquis de Sade. This is not a lesbian sado-masochistic fantasy (though it perhaps masquerades as one), but an exploration of the problems of freedom and restriction, of the bestial and the human, in a world in which men have defined those terms. The male/female reversal, however, with which Pizarnik seems to challenge the male

hegemony over pornography, is not sustained, and she loses sight of what is most powerful about the story as she retreats into her rather unsatisfying conclusion that this is simply "another proof that the absolute freedom of the human creature is horrible".

There is always a danger with the short story – the apparent retraction, the sense of underdevelopment or incompleteness. The strength of the stories in *Other Fires* is that we follow the development of an idea rather than the progression of a narrative; form and character are part of a political exposition. This has its own difficulties – difficulties that are not, however, unrewarding. The refusal of many of these writers to conform or consent to various orders and traditions prevents a simple, straightforward reading. As in Pizarnik's story, the sexual fantasy clashes with the sexual satire, the fact with the fiction, in such a way that neither quite contradicts or confirms the other: the task of lending coherence falls on the reader.

## Another unhappy family

Isabel Fonseca

SUE MILLER  
The Good Mother  
310pp. Gollancz. £9.95.  
0575 03789 X

Every unhappy family may be unhappy in its own way, but there is a good deal that is familiar in *The Good Mother*, a early marriage, divorce, abortion, search for sexual freedom and struggle to manage single parenthood. Anna Dunlap was raised in a patriarchal, upper-middle-class New England family, in which the pressure to achieve was high; seeking an escape from the constrictions of her world, in particular her tight-lipped, humourless husband, Anna discovers a passionate life with her new lover, Leo, a painter. They achieve for a while "the euphoric forgetting of all the rules".

But they are short on conviction, and allow the rules – made up, as Anna discovers, by men, for men – to take their revenge on them.

Passion makes this truly caring woman careless, and in custody case, threatening everything that Anna values most, is instituted by her ex-husband, who fears that their daughter has been dangerously exposed to adult sexuality. Like that other unhappy Anna, she is split between mother-woman and lover-woman; suffering from the confusion and anger involved in trying to fulfil both, she physically wounds herself. The dramatic current in the novel comes from such huge shifts in power – from riding high to complete and crashing loss of control.

Rejecting the possibility of a pure love apart from the supreme maternal one, Sue Miller explores the uses of love and marriage. Both Anna's father and grandfather "married up", and she herself married out, out of her exacting family. She also moves away from the self-loathing of her adolescence, in which "even having flesh was a form of mortification", but finds that declarations of love are stridently used to mask transactions of power. In the consuming desire to keep her daughter, purposeful and even cruel action precludes the enjoyment of love, calm and voluptuous, or even a wise passiveness. Sex with Leo after she stops desiring it becomes a calculation in her custody effort. "I saw that what I was doing was binding him to me; ensuring his cooperation." Only Anna's maternal love remains entirely free of manipulative motives, and it is these untainted feelings which Miller celebrates, along with "the healing beauty of everything common-place".

But this feeling, which is moving at the end of, say, Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, collapses in this novel into a sentimental suggestion that the only true school for a whole and moral life is the family. This is disturbing, since Miller admits in the same true that the family

The blurring of distinctions between inside and out, fantasy and reality, reader and writer widens the frame of reference of individual stories and works cumulatively throughout the volume. Reading all twenty of them (from Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentines, Peru, Mexico), does much to dispel the belief that Latin America is, as Alberto Manguel fears in his introduction, a place in the European imagination, peopled by men with moustaches, guitars and guos, whose only writers are Borges and García Márquez. Despite this diversity, there is powerful singleness of vision. *Other Fires* is shaped by ideas of Utopia, actual and implied, which thread their way through the stories, stories which end time and again with apocalypse, death and destruction, anticipating some sort of change. These writers' keenly felt sense of marginality works to undermine the myths and fables of the society they are writing about, in a way that disconcerts without convincing us that marginality is as effective a revolutionary weapon as some would wish.

ates are either slaves or despots. Anna is filled with grief and shame "that we had asked from her [Molly, her daughter] and she had achieved, at her age, such a mastery over her sorrow". One of the effects of such pain is the loss of language. Molly cannot talk about it, and of her grandparents Anna observes "that neither of them had a tone, a vocabulary, for conflict with the other, and so each borrowed from his relationships with children, those with whom you could be assertive, or condescending, to disagree". In the court scene, Anna is sickened by the falseness of it all; language is foreign language. But even if there is no vocabulary there is definitely a grammar, there are rules, some arbitrary and some – as in marriage itself – useful. But Anna's respect for the forms, given that it is these codes which destroy her world, is perverse. Perhaps it is just that she is indeed the good mother, with the classic virtues of patience, acceptance and hope, even where the case for them is weak.

Miller's style, confident and confidential-like letters from an older sister – invites us to share in Anna's discoveries. Her story is cast as a process of retrospective understanding, working back to a finished chapter in her life, and the language she uses to express it at times becomes too personal and inaccessible to be interesting, like other people's dreams. While Miller's conclusions may seem evasive to some, her accuracy and easy humour are very appealing, and she shows an assurance that is remarkable in a first novel. (There is certainly some of the first novelist's autobiographical catharsis in *The Good Mother*, but characters such as Anna's wild Aunt Babe, her friend Ursula, and the lawyer, Mr. Murphy, keep from becoming overbearing.) In a suspense story that could be pure soap opera, Sue Miller manages continually to enlarge the scope of our concern. Her Anna has a probing intelligence and endurance which characterize a novel as a whole.

# Narrator-Creator data

Lorna Sage

JOHN UPDIKE  
Roger's Version  
316pp. Deutsch. £9.95.  
0253 97988 3

There's a certain breed of narrator who would never have come into existence without the brilliantly bad example of Nabokov's Humbert Humbert, the monster of snobbish charm, of "old world" literacy (set off against a background of new world slang), the paragon of sly self-awareness who outguesses any reader who tries to see round him. It has to be a him because, as Updike's Roger Lambert helpfully observes in *Roger's Version*, "Sadism as a philosophical protest . . . this cankerworm that has helped inspire men to such prodigious feats of torture, lies stillborn in the hearts of the daughters of agreeable Eve." Quite so. And so much the worse for the girls, of course, who lack the intellectual fastidiousness to take offence at the preponderance of pain in the world, and so never muster the ingenuity to sin really creatively. Roger, who is a Professor of Divinity with a speciality in heresy, demonstrates his Humbertian tendency to the sin of style from page one. For example: "The time was late October, a time in New England of golden leaves and tumultuous, luminous skies." A phosphorescent tinge surrounds this luminosity, an aura of decay which belongs to the Fall in more senses than one. Roger, we learn quite quickly, only recognizes pleasure tinged with disgust, self-love mingled suggestively with self-hate.

Making him a theologian is a witty move, given that "playing God" was always the name of this game. It does not, though, preclude the other tell-tale obsession that marks H. H.'s progeny: I have a secret shame; I always feel bitter . . . after reading theology, even poor theology, as it caresses and probes every crevice of the unknowable. Last you take me for a goody-goody, I find kindred comfort and inspiration in pornography, the much-deplored detailed depiction of impossibly long and deep, rigid and stretchable human parts interlocking, pumping, oozing.

Roger is presented with a chance to pursue both hobbies at once when an overgrown graduate student, Dale Kohler from Computing, turns up with a research project for data on the Creator, and invokes his friendship with Roger's unknown niece Verna (a single-parenting on a downtown housing estate with her black baby) to get an interview. Dale is Roger's opposite and enemy – young (well, young-ish), tall, a literal-minded believer, a good guy and (probably) good in bed. Thus the scene is set for self-conscious intrigue: Dale is given what he wants (what Roger wants for him) in the form of a grant, and lots of space to conduct a love-affair with Roger's disappointed wife Esther; meanwhile, Roger seeks out slutish, childish, chaotic Verna, and re-lives the early pains and desires connected with her mother, his half-sister Edna, which may well have had something to do with turning him into the stylish pervert before us (though it is hardly real incest) . . .

Dale is short on style, but does display his own kind of eloquence in praise of the wonders of nature. Here he contemplates a Thanksgiving dinner:

ing, pumping, oozing.

This is threatening stuff, and Roger gets his own back by setting up the research (and the affair) that will provide Dale with the rope to hang himself. Imagining Dale with Esther is only seeming self-torture: the gratification of charing the end of the affair makes it all worthwhile, as does the spectacle of Dale exhausting the data banks in search of God's logo. Roger's own desultory pursuit of Verna has its moments too, most particularly the moment of consummation (following on confused Verna's first serious excursion into baby-battering) where the languages of pornography and theology mingle obscenely:

A sensation of billowing, of an elaborate tiny scroiling, of something like a folded, watermarked letter filling nicely into its creamy, lined and well-licked envelope . . .

While Dale looks for God, Roger looks for evidence of creation's mocking blankness, and

## Revolutionary Justice

The boy in the film was eighteen: he was Crying and they asked 'Why's your mouth that way?' He whimpered how his friend had said 'You ought To have your teeth out, have it done, I'll pay – Then we'll be closer, see? More friends.' 'What did That mean, "closer"? And what made you obey?' 'I'd no-one, and he said he'd see me right; He looked me up – I couldn't get away'. 'Just tell us what he did to you. Go on. Tell us the truth and it'll be OK.' He slobbered and his eyes began to plead. He looked straight at us. He was shot next day.

DICK DAVIS

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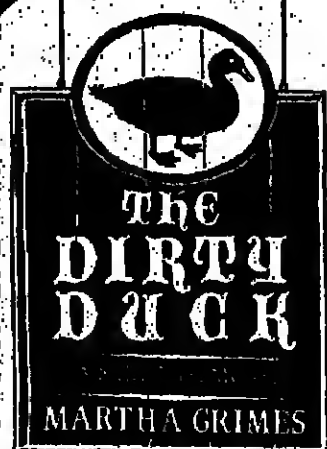
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# Playing host to the Doppelgänger

Robert Alter

The publication of a centenary edition of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (edited by Roderick Wilson, 148 pp., Edinburgh: Canongate, £9.95, 084241 121 1) handsomely reproducing the page layout of the first edition, reminds one of the extent to which fictional doubles are creatures of the nineteenth century. Doubles, of course, have long been part of the paraphernalia of folklore – arguably, as far back as the Akkadians – but it is chiefly in the nineteenth century, from the third decade onward, that the double is frequently adopted by fiction aspiring to psychological realism. This tradition is capped by Joseph Conrad's story "The Secret Sharer" (1912). It may be that in our own time this convention has come to seem too schematic a division of the self; in recent decades, it has been invoked chiefly by way of parody – perhaps most prominently in the fiction of Vladimir Nabokov, who coyly played with doubles from *Invitation of a Beheading* (1932) to *Invitation of a Beheading* (1932). Not surprisingly, Nabokov was an admirer of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

The term *Doppelgänger*, which has been applied to a variety of literary works, actually brackets together two different figures, allied in nature but distinct in origin. We may conveniently call them splits and doubles. In the case of the former, the self is divided inwardly in a kind of mural mosaic, its mixed properties separated and polarized; Stevenson's tale of "polar twins" is the supreme expression of this version of the *Doppelgänger*. For the splits, it is ghastly difference rather than resemblance that is the key. In the more common case of the double proper, the self encounters a disturbing mirror-image in the external world. In the supernatural versions, this doubling of the self is effected by capricious fate or infernal powers; in the more psychological versions, it is a projection of the self, and as such begins to converge with the split. The double draws on a background of folktales about confrontations with demonic figures who exercise a maddening ability to mime the self, generally as part of a scheme to destroy it. The split, on the other hand, may ultimately derive from the tales of opposed twins, or at any rate siblings, like Jacob and Esau, Cain and Abel. Fratricide is very often on the mind of at least one of the members of the split or double pair, including Stevenson's. The convention of the *Doppelgänger*, then, seems to bring to the fore a masked element of internal violence.

A good many of these elements come together in the remarkable Scottish antecedent to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Some have claimed that Hogg was influenced by E. T. A. Hoffmann; Hoffmann's melodramatic story, *Die Doppelgänger*, published two years earlier, represents the lower end of the spectrum of doubles fiction: sheer contrivance. I think it more likely that the two writers simply breathed the same *Zeligst*. In any case, Hogg anticipates later developments in combining the supernatural with the psychological. Indeed, his novel has both splits and doubles, first an allusion to Cain and Abel in the lethal pursuit of one brother by another, then the devil as seductive mirror-image or split-off externalization of the self – presented, to be sure, with supernatural trappings but in the end figuring persuasively as an extrapolation, an enlarged and brightening reflection, of the potential for evil latent in the self. Hogg himself makes elaborate connections between the plot of doom through the sinister double and the grim theological vistas of Scottish Calvinism. Six decades later, that theological background is still palpable in Stevenson's novel, for all the secularity of its London setting. "In the law of God," the attorney Utterson reflects gloomily on his friend Dr Hyde: "there is no statute of limitations."

In any event, Calvinism may reinforce the imagining of doubles and splits but it could hardly be their ultimate source, since they appear at such disparate points on the European cultural map. Dostoevsky's bizarre novel *The Double* (1846) is an instructive case in point by virtue of its thoroughgoing secularity and its representation of the mocking, subversive double as a reflex of social self-consciousness. Mr Golyadkin, the hapless protagonist, is one of those familiar superfluous men of

nineteenth-century Russian literature, a low-level civil servant doing meaningless work who is acutely anxious about his position in the bureaucratic hierarchy, about the social and professional role he is expected to play vis-à-vis peers and superiors. The terrific strain of maintaining propriety in the virtual isolation of urban *noémie* leads to a kind of explosion of the self: in this regard, Mr Golyadkin's Petersburg and Dr Jekyll's London are rather similar, both cities shrouded with fogs that blur perception and visually cut off the individual from whatever there may be in the way of community. Dostoevsky shrewdly suggests that to possess a unitary self is a kind of social obligation, or more radically, that modern urban societies need a myth of the unitary self in order to function, cannot countenance the possibility that their members may be inwardly divided, fragmented, multiple in nature, something other than cogs in the social machine. As Mr Golyadkin's insolent servant says to him at a point when the mischievous double has already disrupted his life, "Nice people don't live falsely and don't have doubles."

It may be instructive to sketch the social profile of the figure who becomes host to the *Doppelgänger*. He is almost invariably male, perhaps because the idea of holding a place in society through the exercise of a profession is paramount. He has no friends, or few (Dr Jekyll's don't see him for months on end), and usually no visible relatives (the parents of Hogg's justified sinner, who exert a baleful influence on him, are a limited exception). He is educated, intelligent, and has modest to ample financial means. Perhaps most crucially, he is always a bachelor. Sterility, disconnection, the displacement of personal by professional life, a developed mind with the leisure to exercise it, are the general fate of the *Doppelgänger* host.

Now, some of these figures are mainly distraught and victimized, like Mr Golyadkin; and in one instance, Poe's "William Wilson" (1839), the *Doppelgänger* is actually not at all but, on the contrary, the embodiment of conscience, whom the dissolute protagonist will eventually destroy. But the convention as a rule is associated with the irruption or revelation of evil in lives of seeming probity, and the most basic question to be asked about these sundry secret sharers is the nature of the evil

they represent. Readers of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* have puzzled for a century over precisely what it is that the repulsive Mr Hyde does in his nocturnal expeditions. Since Dr Jekyll tells us explicitly that he has devised this second self to serve his pleasure, it would seem plausible to think of sex. Given what we do know about Hyde, it is easy enough to imagine that this would involve visits to brothels provided with whips, manacles, and similar appurtenances. But Stevenson's absolute silence on these activities is not, as is often said, simply a matter of Victorian pudor; there is something intrinsically, and weirdly, sexless about both Jekyll and Hyde as there is about most of the arid *Doppelgänger* bachelors. Hogg's Robert Wringhim is, quite properly, scandalized when sexual promiscuity is attributed to him, and heartily affirms his general loathing of women; though his satanic double has in fact seduced an innocent girl in his name, the vicarious sexual conquest remains purely an offstage event. Aggression is the true name of the *Doppelgänger* game, its consummation not in the touch of flesh against flesh, however sadistic, but in murder. Robert Wringhim's tutor in evil sets him on the path to perdition by persuading him to commit murder, trusting that from the seed of one killing many others will blossom. Our first vision of Hyde is trampling a little girl with whom he collides on the sidewalk "like some damned juggernaut". Disturbingly – this is a detail that should not be neglected – the reaction of the crowd of onlookers is in the same key of violence: an apothecary turns "sick and white with the desire to kill him"; a circle of hateful-faced women are "wild as harpies". The initial incident, then, is an introduction to the psychological imbrication of the metropolis as well as to Hyde's evil nature, which is fully revealed when he clubs and stamps to death Sir Danvers Carew, not merely murdering him but "audibly" shattering his bones.

The psychological power of the *Doppelgänger*, whether projection or split, is as an incarnation of the suppressed rage and frustration of the self. Hemmed in, isolated, deprived of friends, family, wife or mistress, the *Doppelgänger* host dreams of turning himself into an unfeeling instrument of sheer destructive force. Towards the end of Stevenson's narrative, Dr Jekyll describes Mr Hyde "drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of

torture to another; relentless like a man of stone". The progression is itself instructive from drinking pleasure, still implicitly a human activity, however orgiastic, to bestiality, to the man of stone.

This exercise of destructive power is a fantasy of terrible freedom, beyond all social and moral restraints. Appropriately, it is a fantasy entertained by what Michel Foucault would call "the carceral subject". Images of imprisonment are very frequently associated with the *Doppelgänger*. In Hogg's novel, there is a growing sense that the protagonist is chained to his secret sharer, who by stages becomes his jailer and executioner. William Wilson's native home and then his school are both explicitly represented as prisons. And Dr Jekyll's bachelor quarters are like a condemned man's cell, "that house of voluntary bondage" in which he sits "like some disconsolate prisoner", having become the abject slave of the creature through whom he thought to act out a dream of pure, immoral freedom. The emotional climax of the novel is not the revelation of the secret itself but that horrendous moment when the servant Poole, directed by Utterson, smashes his axe five times against the locked, unyielding door of Jekyll's surgical theatre, and they can hear "a dismal screech, as of mere animal terror", from the expiring prisoner within.

Whatever the continuities between the societies of the previous century and our own, this vision of modern life as incarceration seems to have lost its old potency, and that may explain in part why writers are less often drawn to the *Doppelgänger*. At one point in his "Statement of the Case", Dr Jekyll, having affirmed that "man is . . . truly two", conjures up a still more vertiginous possibility:

I say two, because the state of my knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, when will outstrip me on the same lines and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a more golly of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens.

It is a moment of haunting prescience. Those multifarious denizens look forward to versions of the protean or serial self in the fiction of Thomas Pynchon, John Barth, Gabriel García Márquez or in Joyce Carey's *The Hours* (1944) and Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), as Stevenson's two become many.

## The Brotherton collection

H. R. Woudhuysen

Fifty Books and Manuscripts  
The Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds

The Brotherton Collection in the University of Leeds is one of the great collections of books and manuscripts in this country, comparable in richness, if not in scope, to some of the American university libraries of the East Coast. Yet the Brotherton is not as widely known among literary, historical, and bibliographical scholars as it deserves to be. The fiftieth anniversary of the presentation of Lord Brotherton's library to the University, marked with a fine exhibition and accompanied by the publication of a magnificently produced catalogue (*The Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds: its contents described with illustrations of fifty books and manuscripts*, 108pp, with fifty illustrations. University Library, Leeds, 0 902454 06 4), provides the University with an excellent opportunity to make the contents of the Collection much better known.

Edward Allen Brotherton (1856-1930) made his considerable fortune by building up the largest private chemical-manufacturing firm in the country: he was an MP for Wakefield, mayor of the town and Lord Mayor of Leeds. His book collecting, in which he was much helped by his nephew's wife, the popular writer Dorothy L. Sayers, began in earnest out of his failure to buy for the town the Towneley manuscript of the Wakefield cycle of mystery plays when it was put up for auction in 1922. To compensate for this disappointment he bought from Quirich a copy of the 1681 *Miscellaneous Poems* by Andrew Marvell, which had the added attraction for Brotherton

of being of local interest. In the last years of his life Brotherton assembled a library of about 400 manuscripts, 30,000 letters and 35,000 printed books, including about 250 incunabula and among the many private press books a complete set of the publications of the Kilmarnock Press.

In the fifty years that the Collection has been at the University it has grown impressively, partly through some very generous gifts and partly through a carefully considered purchasing policy. What it still lacks, however, is a detailed catalogue of its post-medieval manuscripts and printed books.

The main area of expansion has been in the concentration on English plays and verse published between 1600 and 1750. Among the outstanding dramatic texts are Congreve's copy of the Shakespeare First Folio, Sir William Killgrew's own annotated copy of his *Four New Plays*, 1666, and *The Imperial Tragedy*, 1669, and most of Dryden's and Shirley's plays. The verse of this period which the Brotherton has acquired is even more remarkable – out of just under 10,000 items which David Foxon lists in his *English Printed Verse, 1701-1750* the Collection has over a thousand, as well as around fifty valuable manuscript poetical miscellanies and other manuscript material and association copies relating to Pepys, Swift, Wycherley, Pope, Richardson and Sterne. The nineteenth-century material, of which only a fraction is on display, is strong in both Romantic and Victorian writers, ranging from Byron's fragmentary story begun at the same time as *Frankenstein* to a prodigious assembly of Swinburne's books and manuscripts, items from the Bransford-Bright collection, written in minute script, George Borrow's unmistakable handwriting in a letter to the book collector Dawson Turner, the Romney Collection of outstanding

– and the Edmund Osse correspondence, including his manuscript *Zoological Sketches Consisting of Description and Engraving of Animals*, written and illustrated when he was about nine, (the Collection also has Matthew Arnold's autobiography written when he was thirteen), are more visually striking. From the modern period there are eccentrically inscribed but very admiring letters from John Cowper Powys to O. Wilson Knight, who taught at the University, and almost inhumanly neat manuscripts of poems by T. S. Paulin, who was born in the town.

The exhibition gives a strong sense of the wealth of material available in the Collection, and the catalogue, as well as illustrating and describing each exhibit in detail, indicates the range of similar books and manuscripts there. Two final items are particularly attractive: the autograph manuscript written and charmingly illustrated in the mid-seventeenth century by the author, Patrick Cary, of his *Ballads dedicated to the Lady Uvedale*, which presents a major and unedited new text of his poems, and a set of forty-three small books all bound in vellum and placed in a palatial wooden box made in 1617 and designed to look like a book volume to form an exquisite travelling library.

Entries for the Muriel Haskworth Award Literary Prize should be submitted by December 31, 1986. The award of £100, is for a short literary work, prose or poem, on D. H. Lawrence, and entrants must be under twenty-three by the closing date. Entries should be typed and sent with evidence of birth date to The Muriel Haskworth Prize, c/o The D. H. Lawrence Museum and Birthplace, 84 West Street, Eastwood, Nottingham. Further information is available from Professor J. Radford, One, Glen Close, Welby, Notts.

## Letters

### British History

Sir, – I am delighted David Cannadine (October 10) thinks that British History may become the Classics of the twenty-first century, though he seems to have a funny stereotype of the Classics; he might feel more cheerful if he looked closer at the parallel.

One of the strengths of Classics today lies in the close relationship between universities and schools built up over the last generation: there are few schoolteachers who do not have personal contacts with their university counterparts, and few university teachers who do not spend considerable time working in schools. My experiences as a Classical historian in Modern History suggest that such admirable institutions of the Historical Association and the Past and Present Society cannot yet begin to match the enthusiasm and practical effect of local Classics Associations and the Joint Association of Classical Teachers.

Again for the last fifty years, since persecution made England the home of the leading Continental scholars, Classics has been a European discipline, in close contact with Continental thought and eminently suited to the teaching of a European élite. Leaving aside Medieval History, might it not be parochialism, rather than excessive concentration on research, which has weakened British History as an intellectual discipline? The real problem may be that British History as an academic subject only makes sense now as a part of European History.

OSWYN MURRAY  
Balliol College, Oxford.

Sir, – In his Olympian survey of the state of British history David Cannadine fails to offer any useful suggestions as to how British history is to be regenerated, beyond a call for a more popular product, an injunction academics are offered already by their publishers. Dr Cannadine's call for central organizing ideas is a worthy one, but he fails to explain how fashioning a new version of the national past will avoid the perils of teleology. His own survey is scarcely encouraging. A reductionist linking of historical works to supposed political preferences, a neglect of medieval studies, which currently appear to offer many signs of vitality and quality, and a failure to note the growth of interest in British history in much of Western Europe, particularly West Germany, are but three of the numerous limitations in Cannadine's prospectus. Apart from his platitudes he has little to offer but a partial programme in which those who dissent from the chosen path are labelled as archive grubbers or obscurantist troglodytes. If engaging with the contemporary intellectual terrain entails such an exclusive perspective, one is left to wonder what the eventual consequences of Dr Cannadine's call for more present-mindedness will be.

JEREMY BLACK  
Department of History, University of Durham,  
4/46 North Bailey, Durham.

Sir, – Without perhaps intending it, David Cannadine has spoken eloquently of the plight of the humanities, and not just of the state of history. Literary critics, in their demoralized and headlong flight to Mandarin theory, have followed a pattern similar to that described by Cannadine.

The patient is indeed sick, but I am less sure that Cannadine's neo-realism offers a remedy. The concluding paragraph with its talk – as though he were an Austin Rover executive and not a history doc at Cambridge – of "product", "market-place", and "consumer demand" seems to me more a symptom of what is wrong than a route to survival. Serious and original work in the humanities does not need to find new devices to restore a lost market share in the approval of politicians and the public. Any "humanities" which is approved of by politicians should arouse the deepest suspicions of anyone concerned with intellectual integrity. We do not want an approved humanities.

And since when does what "the public" want have much to do with the intellectual life of the humanities? The public did not want *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*, and the literary criticism which sought to defend the new forms of art was itself an object of sneers and disapproval. Anyone concerned with the image of literary

criticism would have told the younger critics to watch out – they might alienate those powerful defenders of cultural standards. Sir W. J. Joynton-Hicks and Lord Elton. This, in Cannadine's recollection, has somehow become a golden era when the historians thrived.

The public (as defined by the Tory press) does not want modern art or music; it does not trust sociology; it finds psychoanalysis laughable; economics and philosophy are incomprehensible; it has not even heard of deconstruction, but when it does it, too, will be greeted with the sternest disapproval. But this particular version of what the public wants reeks of ideology; the public are basically expected to want what their rulers are content for them to want. I am afraid that Cannadine will have us all play safe. But what we have to "market" is sometimes not safe or comforting, and will have to be defended from its enemies with more resilience and cunning.

ERIC HOMBERGER  
74 Clarendon Road, Norwich.

### 'The Wolf Man'

Sir, – So Stanley Fish (August 29) has discovered that Freud is a supreme rhetorician. In fact, Freud's own awareness of the rhetoric of persuasion involved in psychoanalysis is made clear in much of his writing, perhaps most of all in the late essay "Constructions in Analysis" (1937), which addresses a number of the questions in interpretation and persuasion to which Fish apparently believes him to be blind, or to have covered up. "Constructions in Analysis" indeed begins with Freud's recognition that psychoanalysis is often held to be the art of "Heads I win, tails you lose". What, one wonders, has Fish done but retrace, in the mode of a polemic directed at Freud, what Freud has already told us?

Fish's discussion of the central issue of "The Wolf Man" – the issue of the "primal scene" – takes no account of Freud's 1918 additions to his text (first written in 1914-15, but not published), in which he concedes that the scene might rather be a "primal fantasy", that there is no way to tell which it is, and that we are left with an either/or that can never be decided. To ignore this key moment of Freud's thought considerably jeopardizes Fish's account of the nature of Freudian persuasion – as it incidentally makes irrelevant his objections to my account of the case history in *Reading for the Plover* (1984).

Fish can write off the case history of "The Wolf Man" as an exercise in the rhetoric of persuasion only because for him not much appears to be at stake to psychoanalysis: the patient has disappeared, only the reader is left. One might urge, against his view, that the narrative constructed in psychoanalysis – which may be composed of fantasy as well as fact, which works by deferred action and retrojection as well as more straightforward causality, and which is by its nature unverifiable – finds its power of persuasion in its capacity to explain the buried history of unconscious desire, to make sense of an otherwise muddled life story. If rhetorical power were all that is at issue in such a persuasion, psychoanalysis would hardly be "the impossible profession". In fact, one could simply turn it over to literary critics.

The problem may be that Fish believes only in power, not in the unconscious. Psychoanalysis is rather more humble than that, and, at its best, more humane.

PETER BROOKS  
Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University, 53 Wall Street, PO Box 2098 Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520.

### 'The Blind Watchmaker'

Sir, – I do not understand O. B. Keene's complaint (October 10). My criticism of Richard Dawkins's *The Blind Watchmaker* (September 26) was that he assumed, without argument, that expressions like "God created the world" could be easily interpreted on the lines of "Phidias sculpted the statue of Olympian Zeus", and that it was a "shifty evasion" to suppose otherwise. I pointed out that such expressions might have a quite different, non-realist and/or non-cognitive interpretation, but that even if we did assume a realist/cognitive one, there were still questions about the pur-

port and provenance, within a religious context, of such statements. I flatly deny that I illicitly argued from the meaningfulness of such expressions as "the God of Israel" (by which I meant only the God described by Israelites) to His extra-mental, extra-linguistic reality. My account of Israelite belief was indeed contentious, but would be familiar to any Old Testament scholar ("old testament scholar", without capitals, does not mean the same, any more than "god" and "God"). I went on to consider such forms of "the" argument from design as someone who wished to subvert "hard meta-physical theism" might be expected to notice, and suggested that their force was not greatly reduced by neo-Darwinian theory, however elegant and persuasive.

I liked, and praised, Dawkins's book. I do not see how anything I said in criticism of it should justify Dr Keene's accusation of "professional misconduct", or his insinuation that I do not care about the truth. He may not like my style, or what he supposes to be my convictions, but what is that to the point?

STEPHEN R. L. CLARK  
Department of Philosophy, University of Liverpool,  
PO Box 147, Liverpool.

### The Neapolitan Republic

Sir, – A misapprehension on the Neapolitan revolution of 1799 takes much flavour from Jonathan Burnham's review of Raffaele La Capria's *L'amorosa perduta* (October 3).

It is true that in the revolution "the populace revealed its strength", as he writes, but this strength, far from being spent in pursuance of any "new ideas", sided with the reaction. The Neapolitan Republic, a typical product of the Enlightenment, was run by an alliance of part of the middle classes with many of the heirs of the greatest landowning families of Southern Italy, who renounced their fantastic titles (though not their earthly estates), and joined in the Republic. It was crushed by the "Army of the Holy Faith" – an army of peasants, garrisoned by a Roman Catholic cardinal. When arriving in Naples at the rallying cry of God and King, they found a natural ally in the populace, and in Lord Nelson's fleet, which blockaded the bay. The trees of liberty were destroyed, the defenders of the Republic had first to retire to the stronghold of Pizzofalcone and the several castles of the town, and in the end to capitulate, in exchange for their lives. Nelson, in close intelligence with the Monarchs (especially the Queen, who was the sister of the by then beheaded Marie Antoinette), disavowed the capitulation, and the Republicans were executed amid crowds of *lazzaroni* mocking them. The head of the Republican fleet, Admiral Caracciolo, was tried by a court martial on board Nelson's *Foudroyant*, hanged at the foremast arm of his own former ship, and his body then thrown into the sea.

The ruling classes of the Italian *Mazzogior*no have never recovered from the blow which the Bourbons and the English gave them through the physical extermination of their best representatives. The result is here, before our eyes.

GIANCARLO DE VIVO  
Via Egiziaca a Pizzofalcone 43, 80132 Naples.

### Oskar Kokoschka

Sir, – I wonder if Frank Whitford (Letters, October 17) and Norbert Lynton (October 3) are not both being a trifle disingenuous in their eagerness to dismiss Edith Hoffmann's theory that the letters "ES" in Kokoschka's painting "Knight Errant" stand for Christ's dying spelt to the God that has deserted him.

The hypothesis that the letters are in fact "COS" and were the initials (or first three letters of the name) of a nurse who gave Kokoschka gargles in a hospital when he was under doctor's orders not to smoke, having been wounded in the lung on the Russian front, was made public by Heinz Spielmann on June 20 this year, at the Kokoschka Symposium organized by the Tate Gallery and the Austrian Institute. Professor Spielmann's remarks were heard by Mr Whitford; myself and at least 150 other people (including, perhaps, Professor Lynton). But such a careful scholar as Spielmann would be the first to acknowledge that Kokoschka, whom he knew well, was in the habit of saying different things to different

people, and that the nurse theory should be treated with as much scepticism as the Christ theory.

But is the latter really so implausible or, to use Whitford's word, *arcane*? On a number of occasions Kokoschka portrayed himself as Christ, not least in the various representations of his love affair with Alma Mahler. In 1914, for example, the same year he began work on "Knight Errant", he produced the eleven drawings for his *Bach Choral*, a lithographic cycle allegorizing their increasingly troubled relationship. One of these images is entitled "Pieta": it shows Kokoschka lying in Alma's arms in a pose extremely close to that adopted by the Knight. In the painting, however, Kokoschka depicted himself alone, deserted by his mistress whose feline features can be recognized in the reclining nude turned away, at some distance from him, in the landscape.

Soon after Kokoschka went off to fight in early 1915 Alma Mahler terminated their affair. When he returned to Vienna from the Russian front later that year he may well have made significant changes to "Knight Errant", including perhaps the addition of the harpy-like figure in the sky holding a green branch which obscures the lower part of the letter "O" (if "O" it really is). An X-ray of the painting would presumably reveal the extent of his alterations. That the imagery also evokes Kokoschka's experience of lying injured and abandoned on the battlefield only goes to show how rich its iconography is. One of Lynton's alternative readings of "ES", that it refers to the First World War, may well be correct but it would be interesting to have a more precise explanation.

Kokoschka's work of this period is complex and multivalent. "Knight Errant" is the last in a trilogy of dark, apocalyptic canvases which explore the intensity and anguish of the artist's love for Alma Mahler. The others are "Die Windsbraut" or "The Tempest" (originally to have been called "Tristan and Isolde") and "Still-Life with Putto and Rabbit", which alludes to the abortion of Alma's child by Kokoschka. Each of the three pictures is capable of sustaining more than one interpretation.

RICHARD CALVOCCESI  
Tate Gallery, Millbank, London SW1.

### FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of October 24, 1936, carried a review of *The Big Money* by John Dos Passos, from which the following extracts are taken:

With *The Big Money* Mr Dos Passos completes his trilogy of which *The Forty-Second Parallel* and *Nineteen-Nineteen* were the first two volumes. The special technical devices of the first volumes are continued in the third – the turning from one narrative to another and back again, the brief "newsreels" breaking in to document the popular preoccupations of the passing moment, the biographical portraits of representative real persons, the "camera eye" ever again projecting the author himself full into the front of the picture as though to prove his living participation. On the whole both the handling of the material and the actual writing seem better – firmer, brisker, more masterly – in this third volume than in either of the others . . . As a panorama of modern American life the vision has breadth and brilliance, immediacy and fullness. Conception, observation, arrangement, presentation are all professionally competent in the last degree. Three things alone detract from the achievement. One is the puppet-nature of the characters . . . Another is a distinct narrowness in the individual response and action . . . Mr Dos Passos evidently intends to display a corrupt society, but even corruption has more psychological variety than this. There is also the matter of form. Granted that the "newsreel" and other interpolations derive from the intention to evoke a fuller social and national background than the ordinary novel attempts, still this sectional presentation must be regarded as a failure, not a triumph, of synthesis. Nevertheless, *The Big Money* in itself, and the trilogy as a whole, must be recognized and acclaimed as an outstanding contribution to modern American fiction.



## COMMENTARY

## The merits of inconclusiveness

Michael Holroyd

BERNARD SHAW  
Misalliance  
Barbican Theatre

*Misalliance* is an odd play in the Shavian canon and it has had an erratic stage history. It took Shaw less than two months to write it when, in the autumn of 1909, he was commissioned by Charles Frohman, a sentimental Broadway impresario, to give him an "advanced" new work as part of an experimental repertory scheme at the Duke of York's Theatre in London. Shaw subtitled the play *Just Exactly Nothing*, and the public seemed to agree. It was an immediate failure, coming off after only eleven performances. A drama critic in *The Globe* called it "absolutely his worst play" and the *Standard* doubted whether it would ever have reached the stage if written by anyone else.

Yet, over the past seventy-five years, *Misalliance* has kept on returning to the stage because, though plotless, it has supreme theatricality. This would have astonished Shaw's contemporaries, many of whom had wondered if, at the age of fifty-three, his days as a dramatist were over. Shaw himself fuelled such speculation by telling J. E. Vedrenne that "my bolt as a playwright is shot". But what he was actually

signalling was the end of the three-act, well-made melodrama that Frohman had wanted. In his review of a revival at the Torch Theatre in 1939, *The Times*' critic wrote: "Plays of discussion that lead nowhere in particular are likely to disappoint their first audience who naturally expect to be carried to some unusual destination. With the lapse of time inconclusiveness comes to seem a positive merit."

The positive merits of *Misalliance* need subtle understanding and skilful orchestration if they are to reveal themselves in the theatre. Far from producing "just exactly nothing" Shaw packed in rather too much. This is made plain in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production by the fact that it runs for almost twenty-five minutes longer than the three hours announced in the programme – so long that before the end the laughs have given way to yawns. Shaw insisted that he cut his plays to the bone – but he also insisted that he did not use paradoxes. It is sheer timidity not to bring his work up to date – as he brought his political facts up to date – by the process of editing. With twenty minutes pruned from *Misalliance* the play would bloom wonderfully well.

It also responds well to first and easy playing. "For my part I took it at great speed, with a Yorkshire accent", recalled Barry Jones after a specially successful revival in New York in the

1950s, "and the excellent company all joined in the frolic. The second act was a riot for the word go, with the audience and ourselves laughing at each other." By comparison John Caird's production seems staid and uninspired. His actors stand planted staring hopelessly or wander round gesticulating frantically like nine characters in search of a director. It is as if they have no knowledge that they are meant to be in a drawing-room comedy and that we are meant to be eavesdropping on the governing classes – the money-making middle-class manufacturers and the aristocratic administrators of the Empire in conversation at a weekend house-party.

Shaw parodied the genre of drawing-room comedy and threatened to break out of it with Pirandello-like appeals to the audience. But with the descent of the Polish acrobat-aviator Lina Szczepanowska from an aeroplane, and the emergence from a portable Turkish Bath of a Man with a pistol, the play suddenly veers in the direction of Ionesco rather than Pirandello and we make a reconnaissance into the Theatre of the Absurd. "Wont you take off your goggles and have some tea?" Mrs Tarleton asks Lina. "Let me hold the gun for you", offers John Tarleton as the Man fumbles in his breast pocket for a photograph of his mother.

Shaw gives us many clues as to this sudden elevation from the real into the surreal. "I must

be dreaming", exclaims Tarleton. "This is such raving nonsense." And his wife agrees: "I'm beginning to think I'm doing a bit of dreaming myself", she says. But this change from natural to supernatural is not registered by any change in the acting. *Misalliance* is a play of parody and theatrical innovation, but the parody and innovation in this production are treated essentially alike.

The second part, however, works rather better than the first. Brian Cox, who overacts the genial veteran of the underwear trade early on, comes into his own once the nonsense has been up, and is both comic and moving. Mick Ford as the homicidal clerk (Shaw's caricature of himself at the age of eighteen) conveys his boiling resentment with much humorous vitality, but loses some laughs through failing to vary his pace – "Rome fell. Babylon fell. His head's turn will come" passes almost unnoticed by most of the audience. Jane Lapotaire has worked up a marvellously effective pseudo-Polish accent, but she does not have the Amazonian stature to embody Shaw's Lik Force and is disappointingly attired in pilot's overalls instead of the glittering acrobat's trapeze dress Shaw would have liked. The most natural and effective performance comes from Elizabeth Spriggs who, as Mrs Tarleton, beautifully undercuts the others and brings off many endearing and amusing touches.

## In a Lima bower

David Nokes

MARIO VARGAS LLOSA  
Kathie and the Hippopotamus  
Radio 3

The puzzles start with the title. Why *Kathie and the Hippopotamus*? Alternative titles for Vargas Llosa's spider's web of dramatic artifice easily suggest themselves. Why not *Savire and the Surfer*, or *Victor and the Sphinx*? For names and titles are as arbitrary as adjectives and nouns in this Lima bower: descriptions, locations, characters and dialogue fill a limbo of words between fantasy and regret. Kathie is not really Kathie at all, but a rich Peruvian lady who has chosen the nom de plume "Kathie Kenney" for her travel books because "Peruvian names don't sound like real writers". The hippo may indeed be a hippo (as well as a

metaphor and symbol), though Kathie's ghost-writer and literary accomplice Santiago prefers a periphrastic designation of this primitive pachyderm. And what of the female of the species? Santiago opts for "hippopotamus". The word may not be in the dictionary, but I think we should say whatever sounds prettiest. Santiago himself boasts a full repertoire of names and roles. Also known professionally as "Mark Griffin" he adopts the persona of "Victor" as a homage to Victor Hugo. Not the Hugo of *Les Misérables* and *Hernani*, but the victorious Hugo who noddled a full nine times on his wedding night. Together on their roof-top in Lima which, for the purposes of art, they choose to call Pon's, these two deconstruct the myths of Western drama to produce a Dadaesque jigsaw of jealousy, lust and fidelity.

The play opens with the sphinx but it is not as we are frequently reminded, a Greek tragedy. There are echoes of Ibsen and hints of Pirandello as memories are reheated into myths. Kathie offers up the raw materials of her fantasies which Santiago coats in the glutinous hyperboles of his Thousand Islands prose.

This is the kind of drama at which radio should excel. Freed from the constraints of scenery it can exploit the surreal collages which take us from Calro to Walkid, from Lake Victoria to Paris, while remaining all the time in Lima. Ned Chaillet's production is restrained and somewhat slow-paced. Rather than amplify the text with radiophonic effects he allows the words to play over us with minimalist orchestration. There are excellent performances by Morag Hood as Kathie and Edward de Souza as Santiago, who both successfully encompass a ventriloquist's range of roles. Yet for all that the play retains a static, frozen quality. Stripped of their artistic coatings, the episodes of recollection and invention told through a familiar treadmill of sexual jealousy and lust. Beneath the designer logos of hippopotamus and sphinx Vargas Llosa delves into the banal motifs of conventional melodrama: macho husbands, flirty girls, adultery and bullets. "Boredom" and "boring" are the words which occur most often in the play; this translation by Evelyn Fiskburn and Bernard Kricheski. Marriage is boring. Marriage is boring. The life of art (and the art of life) is boring. Each episode ends in failure: every story brings us back to the two phrase-mad aliases Kathie and her ghost-writer play out on their roof-top in Lima. Alone with their meditative games like pupil and teacher, client and whore. The virtue of radio is that it can tune the ear of the imagination to a level in which every memory is a verbal exercise in every description a discarded garment of the bane of literary technique.

## Buying the Big Three

Dan Cruickshank

Newarchitecture: Foster, Rogers, Stirling  
Royal Academy, until December 21

Apart from displaying two projects each by Britain's three most famous living architects, this exhibition confirms the power that a small group of financiers wields within the art establishment. Quite why financiers should want to wield the power is answered partly by looking at the way in which the exhibition has been financed. Eight major companies – mostly connected with the construction industry – have decided that being associated with the Royal Academy and with the promotion of modern architecture is worth paying a lot of money for.

A series of huge posters – showing three gold pencils bearing the names of the big three descending like missiles on London – have appeared on hoardings in the capital. It is estimated that the exhibition has cost £500,000 to mount, with each architect getting around £70,000 to develop and present his project for display. Much of this money must have gone on the construction of the spectacular models which dominate the show but it is worth noting that extra funds were specifically contributed to the model-making by firms other than the major sponsors. For example, the life-size model showing "elements" from James Stirling's Staatsgalerie at Stuttgart was, as the President of the Royal Academy, Roger de Grey, explains in his foreword to the catalogue, made possible by "generous contributions" from a number of German companies.

Who are the key figures behind the exhibition? Two names emerge, Richard Rogers and Peter Palumbo. Palumbo, a property developer in control of a large family fortune, is best known to the public for his failure two years ago to get a glass office tower designed by Mies van der Rohe built near the Mansion House in the City of London. One of his expert witnesses at the public inquiry was Richard Rogers. Palumbo is a collector of contemporary art and, in 1984, he resigned as Chairman of the Trustees of the Tate Gallery after injudicious remarks he had made about the existing régime at the Tate were published by *The Sunday Times*. Palumbo, however, is now back in favour with the Tate. He even has a desk there as his chief fund-raiser for its current building projects – which are being designed by James Stirling, who has replaced Mies as Palumbo's architect for the Mansion House project. The current Chairman of the Trustees of the Tate is Richard Rogers.

Palumbo's connection with this exhibition is undefined. Roger de Grey merely thanks him in the catalogue for his "unstinted support", however the director of Global Assets, one of the show's sponsors, is Gilbert de Botton, a recently appointed Tate Trustee. Peter Palumbo's use of personal wealth and contacts to promote modern art and architecture within major public institutions like the Tate and the RA can be compared with the activities of Jacob Rothschild, who heads a finance company – Jacob Rothschild Holdings – and is Chairman of the Trustees of the National Gallery. Rothschild is known to favour more traditional architecture than the work on show at the RA and, indeed, is the major figure responsible for one of the schemes in this exhibition remaining a project.

But if Palumbo is the man who has made the RA show possible, Richard Rogers seems to be the man responsible for developing the main theme of the exhibition – a theme, inspired, no doubt, by Palumbo's rough handling, by the public over his rejected Mansion House Square project. The object of the exhibition is, quite simply, to demonstrate that modern architecture can make a positive and exciting contribution to the development of London, a difficult task given the bad reception that most major new buildings have received over the past couple of decades but one that Rogers felt that he could tackle with the help of his fellow newly created Royal Academicians, Norman Foster and James Stirling.

The decision to limit the exhibition to these three has a certain logic – they possess international reputations and a glamour that is rare in

English architecture – but it also contradicts the initial aim of the exhibition. If the public were really to be shown what contemporary architecture has to offer the city then they should also have been shown the work of other architects who are radically different from the three on show. On the very day that the RA exhibition opened, Jeremy Dixon's scheme for enlarging the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden – perhaps the most important and complex urban development being undertaken in Europe – was unveiled to the public.

The major project Rogers has chosen to show the public is his design for a new Thames bridge – a scheme which, he argues, could be used to revitalize the stretch of the Thames between Westminster and Waterloo bridges. Rogers's other exhibit is his Lloyd's building which, with its services exposed on the outside and a towering barrel-vaulted atrium within, has become the symbol of British High Tech architecture. It is the ultimate built expression of 1960s thinking about flexibility (the services are exposed, so that they can be easily replaced) and reflects the now generally discredited belief in the advantages of the "white heat" of technology and the use of "futuristic" materials. Rogers's Thames bridge project, though proposing sound and appealing ideas, such as replacing the traffic on the embankment (which could go in a tunnel) with a riverside park, is as dated as Lloyd's in its imagery.

If the High Tech architecture of Rogers is inelegant and repetitive, the High Tech of Norman Foster shows definite signs of evolution with lessons learnt in one project being applied in the next. The schemes on show at the RA are Foster's abandoned project for a BBC Headquarters in Portland Place and the newly completed Hongkong and Shanghai Bank in Hong Kong. James Stirling, who does not so much build on his past achievements as abandon them (hence the extraordinary architecture



One of Norman Foster's sunscroops for the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank. Mounted on the outside of the building, the sunscroops reflect light into the interior by means of computer-controlled mirrors. Reproduced from Deyan Sudjic's catalogue to the exhibition reviewed here.

rnal difference between his proto-High Tech Cambridge History Library, 1964, or Leicester University Engineering Building, 1959, and his current historicist designs) fields the Stonks-galerie in Stuttgart and his losing designs for the National Gallery extension in Trafalgar Square. These gallery designs have been developed for the exhibition and are described, by Stirling, as having been placed second by the assessors who chose the designs by American Robert Venturi. This elevation of Stirling's designs to second place will come as news to the five other architects participating in the competition but is very much in keeping with the self-promotional atmosphere of the RA exhibition and, presumably, reflects Stirling's

hope that his scheme may yet be selected if something goes wrong with Venturi's project.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue written by Deyan Sudjic called *New directions in British architecture* (208pp. with 170 illustrations, Thames and Hudson, £26.00 500 34101 X) which deals with the three architects under such headings as: "Architecture as a political art"; "Plan and non-plan" and "Monuments for a secular age". It has obviously not been an easy project for the three architects are notoriously difficult to work with. The text of the book is largely unenlightening but the captions – those bits of books that censors often forget about – make interesting reading.

## Speak, memorabilia

Nicholas Jenkins

The Named Nature of A. E. Housman  
Pierpont Morgan Library, until November 9

For half a century Seymour Adelman, one of America's most notable bibliophiles, drew on the profits from his real-estate business to purchase A. E. Housman memorabilia. He bought with such devoted, discriminating ardour that eventually his collection in Philadelphia of things worn, annotated or composed by the poet grew into the finest on earth. Sadly, Adelman died last year, and so he has not been able to wander through the crimson shadows of the Morgan Library's East Room where the oddest and most significant items from his great Housman treasury are currently displayed to the public. He himself planned this showing, and, as the exhibition does, his absence now returns a melancholy echo to Housman's Imaginative (and Intellectual) world of the out-of-reach and the irrecoverable. During all his years of collecting, Adelman could never bring himself to visit England.

The show's title, alluding to Housman's famous lecture "The Name and Nature of Poetry" (1933), in which he claimed to know the essence of poetry by its manner of naming "a constriction of the throat and a precipitation of water to the eyes", suggests both the genuine comprehensiveness of these relics and their perfect rectitude. Virtually all departments of Housman's literary endeavours are represented; from a birthday card to his mother – the earliest surviving example of his hand – through the blue volumes of the *Mantus* edition, to a series of loquacious notes written out in a curious script with rather stiff flourishes that were sent in the 1930s to young American admirers, including Adelman. Moreover, a great proportion of the exhibits are germane to the myth of self-division and overwhelming pride built up by Housman's commentators. This is most obviously the case with two notebooks on display here; their neat, constructed sentences of invective stand

waiting for a victim among those classical scholars, none of them rivals, who "dry up the fount of pity". However, if confirmation were needed, the exhibition cleverly demonstrates that alongside his grit and anger, Housman also nurtured deeply sentimental impulses.

The printed copy of the seventeen testimonials he offered when applying in 1892 for the Chair of Latin at University College London is balanced by the letter of congratulation he received from John Maycock, his colleague in the Patent Office which he was determined to quit. "I know you must naturally feel proud. If you don't, you are a duffer." Until his death, Housman kept this among his most valued papers.

There is a selection of communications from literary lions and cats: his brother Laurence, Hardy, who bothers to complain of a "troublesome but not severe cold", Wilde and, as a reminder of modernism's tangled affiliations, T. S. Eliot, who sent a copy of his *A Song for Simeon* pamphlet "in homage". The Housman letters displayed are for the most part some-

what unilluminating affairs, though there is an exception in the draft of his gruff, guarded statement to the French student Maurice Pollet, "The Shropshire Lad is an imaginary character, with something of my own temper and view of life. Very little in the book is biographical."

Adelman, of course, spent a great deal of money acquiring rare printed matter, but the profuse spread of editions and proofs in this exhibition will probably strike all but the expert as less informative or poignant than the neighbouring manuscripts and photographs. Yet Housman responded with almost erotic delight to his first slim volume of verse: "the binding seems to me so extraordinarily beautiful", he confessed to his brother, "that I cannot bear to lose sight of it by opening the book; when I take it down with the intention of reading, the cover detains me in a stupor of admiration till it is time to go to bed." It is hard to reconcile this with the little object stranded there in the vitrine.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 300  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 14. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date.  
Entries, marked "Author, Author 300" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on November 21.

1 The two executioners stalk along over the knolls  
Bearing two axes with heavy heads shirring and wide,  
And a long, limp two-handled saw toothed for  
cutting great blocks,  
And so they approach the proud tree that bears the  
death-mark on its side.

2 The blizzard felted the elm whose crest  
sat in, by a woodpecker's round hole.  
The ploughman said, "When will they take it away?"  
"When the war's over". So the talk began –

3 It is not for a merment the Spring is unmade today;  
These were great trees, it was in them from root to  
stem.

When the man with the "Whoops" and the "Whees"  
have carried the whole of the whispering  
loveliness away  
Half the Spring, for me, will have gone with them.

Competition No 296

Winner: Vivien Vale

Answers:

1 Sweet Suffolk owl, so trimly dight  
With feathers like a lady bright,  
Thou singst alone, sitting by night  
Te whit, te whoo, te whit, te whit  
"Sweet Suffolk Owl" from Thomas Vautour's  
*Songs of Divers Arts and Natures*, 1619.

2 Yet at a bray  
He bath well heayed  
To sol-fa above E – la,  
Fa, lereh, fa, fal  
John Skelton, "Philip Sparrow"

3 Twit twit twit  
Jug jug jug jug jug jug  
T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, "The Fire Sermon".

## At the Palais Garnier

Patrick O'Connor

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER and CHARLES HART  
The Phantom of the Opera  
Her Majesty's Theatre

Gaston Leroux's fantasy novel of 1907 has been the basis for at least four films (if one counts *The Phantom of the Paradise*); Lon Chaney, Claude Rains and Herbert Lon have all lurked in Box 5 as Erik, the murderous Angel of Music, bringing down the chandelier, hanging treacherous stage-hands from bits of the scenery from *Le Roi de Lahore* and eventually trapping the hero on top of a cellarful of gunpowder. For this latest literary offering from Andrew Lloyd Webber, it is doubtful whether Maria Björnsen, designer of so many distinguished opera productions, has ever had such lavish means at her disposal. To mention the set designs first, is to indicate that their evocation of the Palais Garnier is the evening's chief pleasure. From the first glimpse of the proscenium arch bedecked with gilded sculptures and scrolls, the stage shrouded in sheets, to the succession of draperies, suitably dusty and faded-looking, the staircase of the Opéra ball (just like the famous still from the Lon Chaney version – though there the death's-head figure is not the phantom, but a dancer negotiating the stairs), the flights and descents that are a feature of the story are all magnificently staged in Harold Prince's production.

As in the book it is the Opéra itself, where Christine Daaé rouses the audience to a frenzy as her ageing rival Carlotta mysteriously begins to croak like a toad, which is the main character. For Leroux the Opéra becomes an "empire official but immense, covering seventeen stories from the ground floor to the roof, and inhabited by an army of subjects." There are frail old men, kept on more to open and close doors against the draught, old couples forgotten by the management: "the history of France had run its course unknown to them." Very little of this is conveyed in Charles Hart's libretto which concentrates on pop ballad lyrics like "Close your eyes and surrender to your darkest dreams", or "Don't think about the things which might have been". Without prior knowledge of the story the uninitiated may find it all rather hard to follow: when the Phantom (a curiously uncharacterful Michael Crawford) is finally unmasked, he seems to be suffering from an advanced case of ringworm, rather

than being the living corpse whose ugliness was a subject of horror and terror, "even to his parents".

As for the music, there are a couple of rather wao love songs and the title number. The first finale of Act One is an agreeable parody of the end of the Café Momus scene in Puccini's *La bohème*; elsewhere there is a hint of the far-away voices from *Lo Fanciulla del West*. It is pretty thin stuff compared with the mock operas based on Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, laced with chunks of Chopin, and the "Lullaby of the Bells", a song which doubled as a violin solo and a piano concerto, all in the 1943 version with Rains and Nelson Eddy. The whole has been likened to an over-elaborate pop video. However, with its trap doors, magnesium flares, flying corpses and transformation scenes it is ideal entertainment for the pantomime season, and will be fine for children not too prone to nightmares.

## The periodicals: Women's Review

Anne Haverty

Women's Review  
£11.50 per year, 4 Christina Street, London  
EC2A 4PA.

The *Women's Review* first appeared in October 1985, "born out of the desire to create a free space where the voices of many women can be heard" and aiming to "include the expression of divergent beliefs and styles". The first issue was more than promising. It included discussions on the image of women in the magazines of 1985, on nostalgia, on feminism and the film industry; interviews with Dora Russell, Sunil Namjoshi, Angela Carter; fiction by Frankie Finn, poetry by the Polish Anna Swirri and reviews of books, films, music and exhibitions.

The piece on magazines by Judith Williamson was very satisfying, the fiction rather pedestrian, the Russell interview a little soft and the format professional. It suggested a healthily rugged relationship between contributors and the co-operative which published it. As a review for women, the magazine's position was unique, but its social identity could be posited on a line somewhere between the *7LS* and *City Limits*. Since then, over twelve issues, it has maintained its size, its divergences and, by and large, a stimulating and informative level of discourse. The house style, tending to a certain flatness, is relieved by such writers as Claire Duchen, Nicol Gerrard, Deborah Birrell and Sheryl Garratt.

Subsequent issues accommodated such diverse representations of artistic expression as the Mint Juleps, Zora Neale Hurston, Patsy Kensit and Doris Lessing. In issue five, Madonna held the cover and Anna Wickham the inside to a fine fragment of autobiography. Issue six, coinciding with the general election in France, carried a "Dossier Français" with a comprehensive look at French feminism. Fay Weldon, Zoë Fairbairn and Jill Tweedie have figured along with Scandinavian women artists and detective fiction. Despite rumours of financial troubles, the most recent issue (twelve) maintains the richness and variety: Margot Heinemann on women and the Civil War in Spain, Felicia McCarran on Isadora Duncan, an interview with Marguerite Duras, experimental fiction by Marlene Nourbese Philips.

Contriving to be both popular and intellectual, the quality and tone of the *Women's Review* are perhaps necessarily uneven. The tone of Claire Yandell's piece on the actress Miranda Richardson ("a capacity to look a million dollars under a cheap peroxide wig") consortia oddly with Melissa Beho's discussion on Sheila Jeffrey's *The Spinster and her Enemies*. The aim of being celebratory and positive can result in prose that is gushing and sycophantic.

Yet the weakness of the paper may be a kind of strength, in that it reflects the current confusion in feminism, where an extremist separatism coexists with post-feminist revisionism. The letters received from a divergent readership suggest that the magazine may usefully disturb a British movement entrenched in a kind of mindiness and narrow functionalism.



# Creative watershed

Robert Simpson

ERIK TAWASTSTJERNA  
Sibelius  
Volume Two: 1904-1914  
Translated by Robert Layton  
302pp. Fbncr. £17.50.  
0571 088333

We have had to wait ten years for this, the second volume of *Sibelius*, a three-volume study. The period discussed includes the Third and Fourth symphonies, the latter one of the crucial works in twentieth-century music, crucial not because it caused new trends but because it achieves a concentration and inner intensity of the rarest order. The greatest music of Sibelius (like Bruckner's) is a perfect demonstration of Shaw's tenet that it is not important to be the first - only to be the best. Other major works also saw the light in the years covered by this volume - *Pohjola's Daughter*, *Night Ride and Sunrise*, the String Quartet (*Voices Intimate*), *The Bard and Lamentation*.

Though they do not show the highest analytical insight, Erik Tawaststjerna's comments on the music often throw light on details, and on connections between one work and another. His observations on the anticipations of the Fourth Symphony in *Pohjola's Daughter* are illuminating, and deepen the special fascination the symphonic poem has always had; these connections also show the extent and subtlety of Sibelius's diverse use of similar material. If he has not already done so, Tawaststjerna might well be interested to read Lionel Pike's penetrating observations about the opposite uses of the tritone in the Third and Fourth symphonies (*Deethoven, Sibelius and "The Profound Logic"*, 1978). There one finds a depth of onolytic treatment not to be expected in a mainly biographical book such as this, though it is perhaps surprising to find a writer of Tawaststjerna's authority describing

a simple change from minor to major in the Third Symphony as enharmonic simply because the notation changes from sharps to flats. In discussing the finale of the Fourth Symphony and its first big clash between the tonalities of E flat and A, Tawaststjerna says "E flat continues to exert its magnetic force until it finally triumphs". This is demonstrably not so; the passage culminates in blunt alternations of E flat and A chords, a tug of war producing the "resultant" force of C major, a cardinal event in the movement. But the author's unique access to all available Sibelius documentation brings about one real revelation in this chapter, where he shows the origin of the ensuing passage in sketches for an abortive setting of Poe's "The Raven", intended for the soprano Aino Ackté.

Tawaststjerna is undoubtedly right in saying, apropos of the Fourth Symphony, "If one looks at Sibelius's creative development, one can see that he was not a watershed", and he is also right in not attributing too much of the work's character to the fact that the composer had been distressed and frightened by the threat of throat cancer. Such a work had to exist at that time, to condense and crystallize the nature of Sibelian thought as far as it had grown. It had not yet achieved the reconciliation within a single moderate span of the two hitherto irreconcilable extremes of movement caused by Wagner's discovery of a vast slowness that could encompass the pace of stage argument - a pace unheard of in the "classical" era, where Sibelius's sympathies mostly lay.

The symphonies up to No 4 show that he could create movements of both "classical" and "Wagnerian" pace; he had not yet found out how to make a magically unobtrusive transition between the two. They are always kept separate, until the overwhelming discovery of the Fifth Symphony, achieved with the most painful effort. Thereafter, in the Sixth and Seventh, this new skill is exploited still further, and the organic one-movement Seventh is an attainment so apparently terminal that the

non-appearance of the promised Eighth could well have been due to problems compared with which those of the Fifth were elementary. No doubt Tawaststjerna is in possession of information to throw light on this and on the silence of Sibelius's last quarter-century, and it is to be hoped that we shall not have to wait another ten years for this in his third volume.

In the analysis of the larger symphonic movements Tawaststjerna might have profited from a closer sense of tonal implications. He compares his own account of the extraordinary finale of the Fourth Symphony with Gerald Abraham's, but neither even mentions tonality, on which every event in this movement hangs. Both writers make the mistake of trying to connect this movement with a schematic sonata model; it has its origins in sonata-thinking, but like many vital creations it makes its own form that cannot be described with traditional labels such as exposition, first and second subjects, development and so on. Nor can I agree with Tawaststjerna's description of the character of the end of this movement - "the closeness of death becomes apparent as the life processes succumb to paralysis" - this is surely too literal on interpretation both of the composer's fear of cancer and of the origin of some of the material in "The Raven". If Sibelius's own score is respected, there is no collapse in the music. If the tempo is strongly maintained to the end (and there is no indication that it should not be) the effect is one of profound stoicism, true to the composer's determined inner search. Any other interpretation arises from a romanticism Sibelius was avowedly concerned to expunge. His diary on April 2, 1911, asserts "The symphony is ready. *Lacta res est!* It calls for much courage to look life straight in the eyes!" The word is life, not death.

Tawaststjerna's privileged knowledge

## Anti-bourgeois antics

Julian Budden

ARTHUR GROOS and ROGER PARKER  
Giacomo Puccini, "La bohème"  
200pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50  
(paperback, £7.95).  
0 521 264898

This latest monograph, *Giacomo Puccini: "La bohème"*, on the composer's best-loved opera maintains the high standard of its predecessor on *Tosca* (reviewed in the TLS of October 25, 1985). Here the authors' task has been more complex. *La bohème* is not only the first opera of Puccini's maturity; it is also the first in which he collaborated exclusively with the librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa - the latter an eminent poet and playwright; and the teething troubles of their partnership were many and severe. Then too the subject was taken not from a play but from a picaresque novel published originally in instalments in a French periodical of the 1840s with no more of a dramatic frame than *Cranford* or *Pickwick Papers*. Murger had indeed turned his *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* into a play with the help of Théodore Barrière; but this could have been too late for Puccini and his librettists if only because certain of the situations parallel those of *La traviata* to an embarrassing extent (there is even a scene in which Rodolphe's rich uncle persuades Mimì to give up her lover for the sake of his family). All that they took from the play was the idealization of Mimì (a vulgar little gold-digger in the novel) and her amalgamation with pure-hearted Francine.

Arthur Groos and Roger Parker skilfully disentangle the various threads of the opera's genesis. True, the rights and wrongs of Puccini's quarrel with Leoncavallo seem destined to remain obscure; but even such facts as are known do little credit to Puccini, who, it seems, having agreed to a friendly competition with his rival, attempted behind his back to secure exclusive rights to Murger's subject. Outside contributions include an account by Jerrold Seligson of the rise of "Bohème", a stage history of the opera by William Ashbrook and, most valuable of all, an analysis of the musical language of *La bohème* - not, be it noted, of Puccini's operas in general. For it is William

Drabkin's contention that Puccini's outstanding gift was "an extraordinary ability to focus on the problems relating to the single art-work, without the benefit of a governing system or of elements of... a steadily maturing style". I suspect that this may be too modest an assessment; but there is no denying the perspicuity with which the writer draws attention to precisely those features that give the music its power to move. A chapter on the opera's critical reception contains excerpts from Fausto Torrefrancia's famous diatribe against the composer and all his works, a broadside from Wagner's enemy Eduard Henslick and a more perceptive notice from the Frenchman, Camille Bellaigue, as well as tributes from the brothers Mann. The text of a "courtyard act" and a mock-political speech by Schiavonard, that were never set to music, appear in an appendix.

A chapter on the libretto raises some important issues, even if its touch is at times a little heavy ("At first glance, death by consumption or pulmonary tuberculosis seems to present limited narrative options"). But I cannot help feeling that the authors lay too great stress on its alleged revolutionary aspects. Do the music of Rodolfo and his friends really represent an altarpiece on bourgeois values any more than those of the habitués of the Boar's Head, Eastcheap? After all, Murger himself, like Prince Hal, readily forsook the Bohemian life when circumstances urged him to do so. To suggest that Puccini was anxious to play down the subversive elements in the story because "he was already actively non-nobling with the upper crust" seems grossly unfair; so too the charge that Illica and Giacosa "distanced themselves from... current unrest in industrialized Northern Italy by dating their opera about 1830... they began the action after the reinstatement of the monarchy under Louis Philippe, i.e. backdating the opera to the safety of a... counter-revolutionary 'restoration' past". But Louis Philippe was not safely on the throne when Murger's stories began to appear in 1845. The novel was first located under the Orleanist monarchy and the start.

All such quibbles apart, this remains a distinguished publication. It is to be hoped that others on the Puccini canon will follow.



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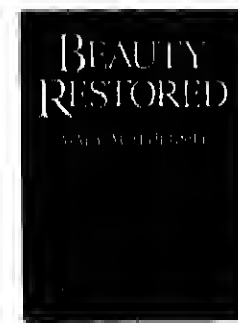
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# In the tradition of Kantotle

Jonathan Bennett

RICHARD E. GRANDY and RICHARD WARNER  
(Editors)  
*Philosophical Grounds of Rationality:  
Intentions, categories, ends*  
500pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.  
0 19 824747 8

This is a Festschrift for H. P. Grice; born in 1913, he taught at St John's College, Oxford, until he went to the University of California at Berkeley about twenty years ago. Not well known outside the philosophical fraternity, Paul Grice is influential and admired within it. Some of his thirty or so unpublished articles and book-length manuscripts have got loose and helped to spread his ideas, but his influence has radiated out mainly from seminars and lectures, and from his publications. Since Grice's viva voce performances do not usually aim to entertain, and since his publications comprise only fourteen papers – one in 1941, a second in 1956, then a hit faster but bringing the average only up to six pages a year over forty-five years – this is a remarkable achievement.

One of its causes is sheer quality: of English-language philosophers now over sixty years old only Quine, Strawson and Davidson contribute as significantly. Some of Grice's influence comes from his collaborations: he really collaborates, working with someone for weeks and months on a philosophical project, in a manner possibly unique for a philosopher of such stature. And he is without peer as an example of how to do philosophy directly, simply and without idiosyncrasy. The special flavours of Quine and Strawson and our other leading philosophers are valuable, but they should not be copied. Grice is the only leader of whom it is true that the level of the discipline would be raised if most philosophers took him as a model of how to think and write.

*Philosophical Grounds of Rationality* opens with a forty-page overview by the editors, Richard E. Grandy and Richard Warner, of (some of) Grice's work, to which he responds at length, offering also a thirty-page section entitled "Life and Opinions of Paul Grice". Then, starting at p. 109, there are nineteen contributed papers, of which about half directly address Grice's work or (in two cases) grow out of collaborations with him. Finally, his publications and "Unpublications" are listed.

Grice deserves a less slack job of editing. The book seems to have been many years in the making, but we are not told what is old and what new; there is no preface. The title and subtitle do not contain Grice's name (though they yield it as an acronym); the editors make a nonsense of something they quote from him by omitting its crucial phrase (on p. 21; on p. 30 they quote it again, intact this time); there is a howler on p. 16, where the editors take it for granted that "if a person desires p, and believes if p then q, then – other things being equal – the person will desire q"; the bibliographies of the contributed papers are not conflated, and there are stylistic discrepancies among and even within them; unexplained abbreviations are used; the list of Grice's publications omits his "Intention and Uncertainty" (1971), which is discussed in one of the papers; work of his that is distributed through three publications is said by one contributor to have had "unfortunately [its] only printed statement" in 1975; and by another to be "unfortunately unpublished". The list of "Unpublications" is not informative enough about lengths, and it omits "Some Reflections about Ends and Happiness", which is discussed by Warner in his own contributed paper. The index is only of names, not topics; it contains rubbish, including the names of irrelevant royalty and of Grandy's dog, "Rone" and "Eshote" have no accent, but "Hector" has one and "Amélie" gets two; "Castañeda" is misspelled (it is misspelled differently on p. 335); the "Grice" entry is absurd – an unstructured list of seventy-seven page references. The book's design and other features are not worthy of the Clarendon Press: for example, someone should have vetoed the typography on p. 175; the handling of footnotes is erratic – compare pp. 271 and 364 with p. 420; and my copy is clumsily bound.

Still, it is good to have this volume; and especially good to have Grice's "Life and

Opinions". In these pages Grice recounts his experiences in a group of "the younger Oxford philosophers [who met] under the leadership of Austin", and reports on J. L. Austin's "high respect" for G. E. Moore – Austin said, "Some like Wittgenstein, but Moore's my man." That a single philosopher could admire Moore and be admired by Grice is worth considering.

What Austin valued in Moore was what he saw as an unusual level of care over details, but where he saw care, many of us see random quibbling that is not controlled by an internalized sense of what the issues and options are. Issues were not vividly real to Moore, because he was moved more by scornful surprise at what philosophers say than by wonder at the human condition or the given world or his own thoughts. And most options were unavailable to him, because he was so woodenly unable to criticize the terms in which he had inherited a problem.

Austin hadn't much taste for large issues. He famously said, "Importance isn't important; truth is", and he moved towards seeing his particular kind of linguistic inquiry as an end in itself rather than as a means to philosophical understanding. That would lead him to overvalue Moore's kind of "care".



"Initiations" is reproduced here from Arthur Press: Talisman by Marco Livingsone (156pp, Thames and Hudson, £14.95, 0 500 54120 5); it can be seen at The Photographers' Gallery, 5 Great Newport Street, London WC2 in the retrospective exhibition of Tress's work which continues until November 29.

He had something that Moore lacked – namely "mastery in seeking out, and sensitivity in responding to, the finer points of linguistic usage" – the phrase is Grice's, and Austin's writings and the memories of many of us can testify that it fits. Grice calls the exercise of those skills "linguistic botanizing", which he says is "indispensable, at a certain stage, in a philosophical inquiry", calling it "lamentable that this lesson has been forgotten, or has never been learned".

Thus, Austin's most notable skill is seen by Grice as something to be included in one's "professional armoury" and used "at a certain stage" in laying "an indispensable foundation". What puts a world of difference between the two is Grice's desire to augment his armoury and do battle with important philosophical problems.

Just how philosophy relates to linguistic botanizing, and how to decide which of them one is doing, are hard questions of which I have seen no finer short treatment than Grice's clear and modest discussion on pp. 58–61. All his work has the same purity: nothing in its form or content swaggers, postures, or otherwise calls attention to its author; puts a decorative covering over a difficulty in the position being taken; or seeks advantage from deriding rival views.

Grice's willingness to write in plain, exposed prose is what, above all, makes him exemplary

To come to have those virtues of his we need only courage and patience.

More than most philosophers of his rank, Grice attends to the great philosophers of the past, though not, he adds in a phrase calculated to offend, to "relatively minor" figures like Wollaston, Busenquith and Wittgenstein. His account (pp. 64–6) of how and why "we should treat those who are great but dead as if they were great and living, as persons who have something to say to us now" is sane and inspiring. His view of the unity of philosophy down the years is supported by a thesis about the unity of philosophy considered atemporally, the thesis – perhaps – that "there is only one problem in philosophy, namely all of them". Grice admits, with "embarrassment", that "I do not know exactly what the thesis is which I want to maintain", and proceeds to examine possible candidates. His embarrassed uncertainty is fruitful.

The editors want "to exhibit the connections among Grice's various projects", because "the systematic nature of his work is little recognized". They have some success in this, though they do not get far with exhibiting the unity of Grice's method or, more generally, with getting across the flavour of his work.

The bit of it that I have reported goes only as far as what a person means on a particular occasion: the person, not the utterance; and a particular occasion, not in general. (Patrick Suppes's paper in this volume defends that starting-point for meaning theory.) Grice tried in 1968 to get from the person to the utterance by getting from the particular to the general, with help from the notion of "having a certain procedure in one's repertoire". This notion, at least in Grice's use of it, involves the idea of being guided by some rule of which one is not aware, and the notion of unconscious guidance is what the editors focus on. (Something like, incidentally, would be needed in any viable rival to Grice's account – as, for example, the one I prefer, which uses the concept of convention to get from what a person means on an occasion to what an expression means in general.)

This leads the editors further into Grice's "Method in Philosophical Psychology", and especially into its humane reminder that our beliefs about one another's minds are not just explanatory devices. A good theory of the mind, Grice says, must not only show how mentalistic concepts help one to predict and explain behaviour, but must also provide for my being interested in what your mental state is "because of a concern" for you. This thought kicks off an aggressive counter-attack against those who question whether we should continue trying to understand one another in the humdrum belief-wait-hope-fear terms of "folk psychology". This argument strikes me as vulnerable, and the "eliminative materialism" will find plenty to say in reply. The ongoing argument will be instructive.

The point about "concern" is also the pivot for a modulation into Grice's work in ethics. The editors follow that out to a certain distance (first squeezing in three pages on meta-physics); but they have to rely on unpublished work, and eventually on "a recent conversation" with Grice, and since I have not had access to these materials I am left with no firm grasp of what is going on.

When Grice replies to the editors on his theory of meaning, he is illuminating on the nature of propositions, about which they had raised questions. He also has a treatment of unconscious guidance by rules, and of the related fact that his theory, as interpreted by himself and others, implies that someone who speaks meaningfully has an infinity of intentions.

That threatening infinity entered the story in response to a challenge to the original theory by Strawson, who presented a case in which I do something (i) intending to get you to think that P, and (ii) intending this to come about through your realizing that (i) is what I am up to, but not (ii) intending you to realize that (i) is what I am up to. Grice's original answer is what I am up to. Grice's original answer marks off the species "meaning" from the genus "trying-to-produce-belief" by requiring, for meaning, a certain kind of openness.

freedom from manipulation; and Strawson argued in effect that the required openness must go all the way up – hence the looming threat of an infinitely high stack of intentions. Grice's solution involves saying that the latter represents a kind of ideal, and that we may be entitled to "deem" a speaker to have such a super-rich intentional state if his behaviour indicates that he is close enough to the ideal. But really Strawson overdid the demand for openness in meaning; or so I have argued, and Andreas Kemmerling in his paper in this book contends that I didn't push that point far enough. Anyway, even if meaning did require openness all the way up, it is enough for the speaker not to have a devious intention at any level; he doesn't need an undevious intention every level. So we don't need help here from the suspect notion of deeming someone to have intentions that he doesn't have.

In the rest of his "Reply" to the editors, Grice doesn't really answer them on philosophical psychology, metaphysics and value theory, and indeed they didn't give him much to answer. Politely announcing that he will "take up, or take off from" their remarks, he sets off on his own, outlining views of his about what metaphysics is, could be, should be. This brief sketch glows with Gricean virtue: it is deep, bold and clear, and the difficulties are lit with the same intensity as the solutions.

Grice makes metaphysics collaborate with his philosophy of mind in support of a strong view about the objectivity of value. A crucial element in this line of thought is the unfashionable notion of "autonomous finality" – the notion of substances that are "essentially 'for doing such and such'". He doesn't mean that someone values them for doing such and such, or that we call them so-and-so only because they do such and such, but just, blankly, simply, that they essentially are for doing such and such. I doubt that a good metaphysical account of our world would employ any such notion; but that partly reflects doubts about Grice's views about what constitutes good metaphysics. In particular, he writes:

This metaphysical house-room is found for the notion of absolute value is a rational demand. To say this is... to say that there is good reason for saying it to be true that the notion is acceptable... Granted that there is a rational demand for absolute value, one can then perhaps argue that within whatever limits are imposed by metaphysical considerations already made, we are free to rig our metaphysics in such a way as to legitimize the concept of absolute value.

These excerpts may be misleading, but even when the passage is taken as a whole there is an air of liberalism about it that could make it hard to defend.

But this part of Grice's "Reply", packed as it is with content, is too sketchy to be confidently argued with. We need more; and I, for one, ache for the appearance of Grice's book-length unpublications. He speaks of "the (one hopes) not too distant time" when his 1979 Locke Lectures are published, but what about the 1983 Carus Lectures?

The contributed papers include good things by Donald Davidson, Jaakko Hintikka, Gilbert Harman, Alan Code and others. I shall report on three of the others.

John Searle has a rival to Grice's account of what meaning is – he wants to replace "intention to make the hearer believe" by "intention to represent a state of affairs". The Gricean openness condition is not needed in analysing meaning, according to Searle, but only in analysing communication; for it is only the latter that must involve a hearer, a beneficiary of openness. What a speaker must intend in communicating, Searle maintains, is that the hearer understand; not necessarily that he believe. Searle's use of "understand" against Grice seems to me circular: there seems to be no relevant concept of understanding that is not parasitic upon, and thus unavailable for the analysis of, the concept of meaning. Similarly with representation: what is it for a gesture of mine to represent the fact that P, if not for it to play some part in an attempt to tell someone something involving the fact that P? Searle, however, thinks he can explain it otherwise. According to him, a gesture represents the state of affairs that it is going to rale if "a criterion of success" of the gesture is that it is, and not because of the gesture, going to rain. Searle's notion of "success" seems to him to be, for meaning, a certain kind of openness.

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This metaphysical house-room is found for the notion of absolute value is a rational demand. To say this is... to say that there is good reason for saying it to be true that the notion is acceptable... Granted that there is a rational demand for absolute value, one can then perhaps argue that within whatever limits are imposed by metaphysical considerations already made, we are free to rig our metaphysics in such a way as to legitimize the concept of absolute value.

These excerpts may be misleading, but even when the passage is taken as a whole there is an air of liberalism about it that could make it hard to defend.

But this part of Grice's "Reply", packed as it is with content, is too sketchy to be confidently argued with. We need more; and I, for one, ache for the appearance of Grice's book-length unpublications. He speaks of "the (one hopes) not too distant time" when his 1979 Locke Lectures are published, but what about the 1983 Carus Lectures?

The contributed papers include good things by Donald Davidson, Jaakko Hintikka, Gilbert Harman, Alan Code and others. I shall report on three of the others.

John Searle has a rival to Grice's account of what meaning is – he wants to replace "intention to make the hearer believe" by "intention to represent a state of affairs". The Gricean openness condition is not needed in analysing meaning, according to Searle, but only in analysing communication; for it is only the latter that must involve a hearer, a beneficiary of openness. What a speaker must intend in communicating, Searle maintains, is that the hearer understand; not necessarily that he believe. Searle's use of "understand" against Grice seems to me circular: there seems to be no relevant concept of understanding that is not parasitic upon, and thus unavailable for the analysis of, the concept of meaning. Similarly with representation: what is it for a gesture of mine to represent the fact that P, if not for it to play some part in an attempt to tell someone something involving the fact that P? Searle, however, thinks he can explain it otherwise. According to him, a gesture represents the state of affairs that it is going to rale if "a criterion of success" of the gesture is that it is, and not because of the gesture, going to rain. Searle's notion of "success" seems to him to be, for meaning, a certain kind of openness.

have explanatory value; I don't see it. Strawson expounds and criticizes a view of Grice's about the meaning of "if". The short of it is this: someone who says "If she bet heads, she won" speaks truly just so long as she either didn't bet heads or did win (or both). The juicier part of the story is Grice's explanation of why so many conditionals that are true according to him strike people as false. Consider "If James II didn't succeed Charles II, then Oliver Cromwell did". This bizarre conditional, according to Grice, is true in what it actually means, namely that *Either James II succeeded Charles II or Oliver Cromwell did*. But our rules for good behaviour in conversation include something like this: "If you can say more without using more words, do so"; and that condemns the behaviour of someone who says "If James II didn't..." etc if he knows that James II did etc. So in normal circumstances a civilized speaker will say "If James II didn't..." etc only if he doesn't know who succeeded Charles II, and thinks there is some chance that Cromwell did; and by asserting the conditional he is conversationally implying that there is some chance that Cromwell succeeded Charles II. So his true conditional strikes us as bizarre because what it conversationally implies is wildly false.

Grice's theory of conversational implicature, of which this is a fragment, is powerful and widely applauded. It is serviceable for more than just defending the minimalist account of the meaning of "if".

I don't agree with Grice about "if", but not for Strawson's reason. Strawson conjectures that "If P, Q" means something like "There is a connection between P and Q which ensures that: if it is not the case that P is true and Q false, whereas Grice holds that it means only what comes after the colon. Now, Strawson argues, whatever is the truth about "if", it seems obvious that there could be a connective that meant what Strawson thinks "if" means, whereas Grice's line of argument implies that there couldn't be; so Grice's position is guilty of overkill, and must be wrong. In fact, Strawson is wrong about what Grice is committed to. Perhaps he has to say that we, with our actual forms of life, couldn't have a Strawsonian "if"; that if we tried to have one, all its surplus meaning would (so to speak) drain off into mere conversational implication, leaving only "Either not-P or Q" as the conventional meaning. But there could be a society where people often gave disjunctive information – something meaning "Either P is false or Q is true" – although they knew which disjunct was true. It might be a society where this happened a lot in games, intelligence tests, initiation rites, teasing, etc. Given a wide enough prevalence of that kind of disjuncting, there would be room for a connective whose conventional meaning was that of "It is not the case that P is true and Q false, and this is not one of those deliberate withholdings of information". That would be the Strawsonian "if".

George Myro presents, and develops in formal detail, an idea which he got in conversation from Grice. Is what is in my hand new or old? Well, the coin I am holding was minted last week; the silver in my hand is as old as the hills; but my hand is empty except for a silver coin. This illustrates a general problem, known to Aristotle, about how things relate to the stuff they are made of. If the silver is the coin, then (it seems) it can't be true that the silver is old and the coin new. Some say that strictly there is no coin in my hand, only some (old) silver that recently became coin-formed. Others say that there are two coincident objects in my hand, an old mass of silver and a new coin. Another line, that has recently appeared in print a few times and apparently occurred independently to Grice who impressed Myro with it, is that the silver is now (identical with) the coin, but that last month it was not. This introduces the notion of x's being y at one time and not at another. So the silver is old, because it existed a million years ago. The silver is now the coin; but it doesn't follow that the coin is old; for at the remote times when the silver existed the silver was not the coin. It's a long, complicated, challenging story; Myro's development of it is full of pith. I am still thinking about his "Grice Rules" for quickly evaluating philosophical ideas put forward in conversation by Paul Grice: the rule says that the idea will be right if, but only if, it initially strikes one as incredible.



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# Making and not making it

David Robinson

MICHEL CIMENT  
John Boorman  
271pp. Faber. £25.  
0571 38314  
Conversations with Losey  
436pp. Methuen. £20 (paperback, £9.95).  
0416401201

Michel Ciment, one of the best contemporary critical historians of film, has been influential in initiating new ways of making books on the cinema. His studies of Stanley Kubrick (1983) and now John Boorman are constructed in a form closer to cinema montage than to classical book structure. Illustrations are as important as the text, and are never gratuitous decoration. juxtapositions and groupings of stills can be more vivid and more relevant witnesses of a film-maker's visual style, personal imagery and physical presence than words, and, in Ciment's books, are complementary to the text, and must be read along with it. The text of *John Boorman* consciously uses the collision of three separate and complementary elements: Ciment's own lucid critical commentary; interviews with the director; and the testimony of the people who have worked with him – none of them kindly eulogies, but considered views of creative collaboration.

The picture which emerges is vivid, multi-dimensional, and consistent with Boorman's lively self-portrait in *Money into Light* (reviewed in the TLS of November 15, 1985), an account of the making of *The Emerald Forest*. The quality that distinguishes Boorman from

his British contemporaries is a sense of magic. All his films have in them something of the Arthurian quest which was the overt theme of *Excalibur*; and Boorman declares implicit faith in the mythic power of the film: "We employ all the resources of an industrial and technological society to create a dream, a luminous cone of light which, when projected on a wall, will also project a little of our soul."

Boorman has a singular visual imagination, and intense dedication in realizing it. He is, says Ciment, "a cosmic film-maker [who] plays with water, fire, air and earth". His films are about "the relationship of nature and culture, on man's capacity equally to ensure his pre-eminence in a hostile world and engineer his own downfall".

Ciment shows him delighting in the difficulties he chooses to make for himself – difficulties which might seem to the outsider needlessly undertaken: why not do it all in the studio? Boorman's imagination apparently needs to feed on the locations. So it was indispensable for him to cross the Pacific to find the remote and inconvenient island of Palau for *Hell in the Pacific*, and to undertake the appalling hazards of the rain forests in *The Emerald Forest*.

Important as locations are to him, once he has them, Boorman does not necessarily use them for naturalistic ends: "he succeeds in constantly playing off realism and stylization. . . . A fervent inveller, a tireless tracker of images, he carries his personal universe with him wherever he goes and is willing to subject himself to severe physical hardships if, in these different countries, there might exist the possibility of reconstructing his inner world."

Ciment pays proper tribute to Boorman's



A still from the 1932 version of the film *Sherlock Holmes* showing Clive Brook as Sherlock Holmes, Reginald Owen as Dr. Watson and Miriam Jordan as Alice Faulkner. The photograph is reproduced from *Sherlock Holmes: A centenary celebration by Allen Eyles* (144pp. John Murray. £10.95. 07195 43320), to be published on October 30.

awesome mastery of every aspect of his job. The vivid picture of his working method – long and conscientious pre-production, the closest possible contact with designers, endless patience and diplomacy with actors; and then the shooting, the adaptation of locale, the manipulation of camera and colour to match his mind's eye – might serve as a textbook of film craft.

Throughout his career, Boorman has generally been successful in finding an accommodation with the film establishment. From the start, he says, he decided to "work within the system while attempting on every possible occasion to expand its boundaries". Part of the tragedy of Joseph Losey was that he could never successfully make this accommodation. Much of his life-story is an account of discord and disappointments with producers and distributors.

Ciment's *Conversations with Losey* demonstrates an alternative method of dealing with a film author – autobiography through interview. These interviews with Losey were conducted between 1976 and 1979 and run to almost 400 pages. The advantage of the method is that a good interviewer can manoeuvre his subject into a situation where he is less selective and less guarded than he would be in a regular, reflective biography.

Losey does not emerge as a particularly lovable figure. His life, which had taken him

from an Amberson childhood through fellowing commitment in the 1930s and the Hollywood witch-hunts to ultimate exile in Europe, had left him suspicious and bitter. The book is a list of people for whom he harboured dislike or contempt. He rarely thought much of his actresses: Glenda Jackson was "a bore to work with" and Virna Lisi had "a certain vulgarity". He treasured the people he trusted, however, and prided himself on his ability to quarrel with them.

He had a characteristically American bent for self-analysis, and speaks of his "insecurity in childhood, insecurity in school, the engraving of the Hollywood insecurity by the blacklist, the insecurity of two wars and many other kinds of insecurities, including sexual and certain point" (one might guess from these interviews, at many points). The business of film-making is all insecurity. Few could speak with more authority than Losey about "those bleak periods of promotion in which what fertility there is and what creation there is amounts to seeds sown on sterile land where they can't take root. . . . Work would be very much changed if film-makers like me were allowed by economic circumstances to maintain a continuity of work, to go directly from one film to another." As it was Losey directed thirty-two films in forty peripatetic years; these *Conversations* record precisely twice as many cherished but frustrated projects.

## Laughing it off

Dilys Powell

GERALD WALES  
*Canned Goods as Caviar: American film comedies of the 1930s*  
386pp. University of Chicago Press. £29.75 (paperback, £10.95).  
0226876632

There has never been comedy to rival the work of the 1930s in America. Some of the superb jests of half a century ago proceeded from hopelessness, from a country torn by the Depression, and Gerald Wales sets the films he discusses against this kind of social background. *Mr Deeds Goes to Town*, for example, is seen not simply as an essay in All's-Well, a category to which the work of Frank Capra is often relegated, but as a reflection of the mood of optimism that was emerging by 1936, when the film was made.

The book has attractions for readers who simply want to recall the films themselves, their players, and their sometimes magnificent lunacy. A dozen movies are dealt with, from *She Done Him Wrong* to *Destiny Rides Again*, from "next jokes" to pacifism. Wales goes through the plot, or what passes for it (has *Duck Soup* a plot?), one is glad to be reminded of incidents and gestures. He comments on the contribution of the cast and looks closely at the contribution of the stars; for some readers this will be the most interesting part of the book. They are, in his hands, an enjoyable comedy scene account of Cary Grant's performance in Howard Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby* as the scientist bereft of his brontosaurus, (he apparently learnt comedy timing from George Cukor).

There is a good chapter on *Mr Deeds Goes to Town*, with comments on the relationship between Gary Cooper's own personality and the characters he plays. Wales properly dismisses the suggestion that Cooper was a "pose actor" whose success lay in his likeability rather than his skills. There are valuable comments, too, on the four stars of *Libeled Lady* and on the Carole Lombard of *Nothing Sacred* (a subversive comedy: it is called here). One is impelled to look and think again, not in disagreement but to revive memories.

The most elaborate discussion of performance comes in the opening chapter on *Cry Lights*. Wales sees the film as the last of the Victrola Chaplins. By the end of the sentimental tale the tramp is a defeated, angry, nevertheless, he gains, according to Wales, another kind of victory: he can suffer, he can feel the human race. Some of us, thinking of Chaplin who was to come, of the expeditious, into loftier fields, may prefer the old shabby knockabout figure. The canonization of the great comedian seems as unfortunate as the tendency of some French critics to identify him with the sublime – "It is by love that Chaplin saves a man and a woman by losing himself, as Christ – let us venture: the parallel saved mankind by dying on the cross."

Criticism is a serious business, but as the film says, "nothing is sacred".

## Baiting the trap

Gregory Palmer

D. F. MCKENZIE  
*Oral Culture, Literacy and Print in Early New Zealand: The Treaty of Waitangi*  
47pp. Wellington: Victoria University Press.  
\$NZ6.95.  
086473 0438

D. F. McKenzie's purpose in this book is to consider the impact of literacy and printing in New Zealand in the two-and-a-half decades preceding the accession of British sovereignty – 1815–1840. These years "replicate in a specific and largely quantifiable context the Gutenberg revolution in fifteenth-century Europe". This publication was intended to commemorate the printing by William Colenso, a pioneer printer in New Zealand, of parts of the New Testament in Maori in 1835. Colenso went on during the next five years to print the whole of the New Testament, and the text of the Treaty of Waitangi, which purports to be the instrument of the transfer of sovereignty from Maori chiefs to the British Crown. Dr McKenzie's essay concludes with some comments on contemporary developments arising from the Treaty: the Waitangi Tribunal, a statutory body which has been constituted to advise on its meaning, and its incorporation into the New Zealand Bill of Rights which is at present under consideration.

Unlike Gutenberg (we must assume), Colenso and his clerical sponsors, the Anglican missionaries of the Church Missionary Society, had a sense of the historic nature of the occasion they were privy to: when sheets of what they (wrongly) believed to be the first book printed in New Zealand were pulled from the press, the printing office was, in Colenso's words, "filled with spectators to witness the performance". It was an exciting affair for the missionaries, because they were participating in a plan that is comparable in its imagination, boldness and absurdity to the Puritan errand in Massachusetts. They believed that by the simple expedients of teaching the Maori to read and write in their own language, and then printing suitable, that is mainly scriptural,

material for them to read, a civilizing trend would be set in motion, and, under missionary tutelage, a Christian Maori nation would emerge.

There are sufficient contemporary eyewitness accounts, from Charles Darwin for example, to show that at least in the proximity of the original mission settlement in the Bay of Islands, the plan gave the appearance of working. Maori artisans and labourers were observed in what might have been English fields engaged in English occupations. These appearances inspired the missionaries with an optimism that has been passed on through their letters and journals to historians, and it has been generally accepted that literacy and English civic knowledge had become sufficiently widespread among the Maori by 1840 to make their consent to the Treaty of Waitangi valid.

Drawing on his knowledge of the history of literacy and printing in Europe, McKenzie questions the extent and significance of Maori literacy in 1840, and suggests that the Treaty is a witness, but only a partial witness, to a "moment in the contact" between on the one hand a European culture in which much depended on the authority of written statements, and "the flexible accommodations of oral consensus on the other". Thus the text must be "reconstructed" if its real significance is to be understood. He makes use of research by Ruth Ross and Claudia Orange (published successively in the *New Zealand Journal of History*) on the texts of the Treaty to conclude that the Maori text, which differs considerably from the English, "surrenders less and guarantees more than any of the English versions". Power resided with the drafters and the literate.

McKenzie's argument rests on the post-McLuhan distinction between print and oral cultures, which means that he is in effect attempting, as he indeed honestly proposes at the beginning, to draw a parallel with European history three centuries earlier. This undoubtedly has some uses, not the least of which is to provide an intellectual foundation for the activities of the Waitangi Tribunal through which the "oral consensus" now speaks. But perhaps the print/oral distinction is a confining rather than a fertile idea. It is not obvious from this essay that "reconstruction" of the text adds

much to what the two historians mentioned above have been doing all along, perhaps without knowing.

Tricks are often the resort of the powerless, and the parties whose ambitions most outstripped their resources in New Zealand in 1840 were first the missionaries, one of whom, Henry Williams, translated the Treaty, and second, the British Resident, James Busby, who had proposed an earlier confederation of Maori tribes, and who later claimed to have drafted the Treaty.

According to most accounts, the Treaty of Waitangi was hastily drafted, ambiguous and badly translated, possibly from a lost English text, into a form of Maori that was adulterated with missionary-created neologisms. It was not negotiated but imposed, by misrepresentation rather than by force; it transferred sovereignty from a non-existing polity (the confederation of tribes) to the Crown and it was not the sole ground of the British claim to sovereignty. The only evidence of "oral consent" is not from such accounts as exist in the discussions at Waitangi or elsewhere, but the "signatures" attached, the validity of which McKenzie gives good reason to question.

The proposed Bill of Rights "recognises and reaffirms" the Maori rights granted by the Treaty without, according to the commentary in the accompanying White Paper, "attempting the inherently impossible task of defining precisely what they are". Can such recognition amount to much? The Treaty of Waitangi has come to have symbolic importance. McKenzie's most pertinent comment might be his observation that the original text was a trap – he quotes King Lear:

I do invest you jointly in my power,  
Precedence, and all the large effects  
That troop with majesty. . . .  
. . . .  
. . . .  
The name and all the additions to a King . . . .

But the trap might be baited again if the original ambiguities are unprincipled instead of clarified by further literary reconstruction, and symbolic sovereignty turn out to be worthless without the pre-eminence which King Lear surrendered, and which the Maori lost in the years following the Treaty.

Twenty-six of its abridgement: both remained in print throughout the nineteenth century.

It is noticeable that there are many more grammars than dictionaries, but that the dictionaries have a wider international market; Boyer's were printed in The Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Lyons, Basle, Utrecht and Paris, as well as London and Dublin. Some of the grammars have a provincial circulation, suggesting their use as school-books: Bath, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Ipswich, Winchester, Liverpool, Chichester, Bristol and Glasgow, for example, as well as North American editions in New York and Philadelphia.

There cannot be much that Robin Alston has missed. The index of libraries cited runs to thirty-two columns. A check in Volume One of the *Cathedral Libraries Catalogue* and in Volume One of the new *Short-Title Catalogue of English Books to 1640* (both of which probably appeared too late to be used) shows a mere twenty or so editions before 1701 for which extra copies can be located. When the whole publication is complete, we shall have a most interesting picture of the early history of English attitudes to foreign language learning.

*Moscow's Problems of History: A select critical bibliography of the Soviet journal Voprosy Istorii 1956–1985*, compiled by John L. H. Keep, has recently been published as No 5 of the Bibliographical Series of the Institute of Soviet and East European Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa. Nearly 1,300 articles from *Voprosy Istorii* are critically analysed under the following section headings: Historiography, General History, Russian and Soviet History and Russia/USSR: Regional and Local History. Professor Keep writes in his foreword: "The purpose of this bibliography is to illustrate, for the non-specialist as well as for the professional student of Soviet affairs, the

## Learning Englysshe and Frensshe

David Shaw

R. C. ALSTON  
*A Bibliography of the English Language from the Invention of Printing to the Year 1800*  
Volume Twelve, Part One: The French language: Grammars, miscellaneous treatises, dictionaries  
208pp. Available from the author, Reference Division, British Library, Great Russell Street, London WC1 3DG. £58.

R. C. Alston started work on his *Bibliography of the English Language from the Invention of Printing to the Year 1800* in 1958. It made its first appearance in 1965 and by 1974 ten volumes had been published (covering English grammars, dictionaries, spelling books and related topics). In that year Dr Alston produced a photoduplicate of his own marked-up copy of these parts in a single large volume (Janus Press, Ukley). Though a volume has appeared on place and personal names, progress since then has been understandably slow, considering the work the compiler has undertaken as head of the Eighteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue project (ESTC) at the British Library.

There will be twenty volumes in all. Volumes Twelve to Sixteen are to cover the production of grammars, dictionaries, and so on, of foreign languages (Romance, Germanic, Latin and others). We now have the first part of Volume Twelve covering books on the French language published for the English market; that is, printed for the most part in Great Britain and North America in English or French (and also Latin), with a smaller number of items published on the Continent but containing English material. There are 734 entries and fifty pages of facsimile specimens which illustrate changes in typographical presenta-

tion of such things as dictionary layout and the display of tables of irregular verbs or attempts at phonetic representation of French pronunciation.

Inevitably, most of the material in the volume is from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The earliest items are a French-English vocabulary printed by Caxton in 1480; "a tytel treatyse for to lerne Englysshe and Frensshe" (Wynkyn de Worde, 1497); and "a good booke to lerne to speke french . . . vng bon liure . . . a apprendre a parler franchoys" (Richard Pynson, c. 1500). Approximately seventy items date from before 1600, many of them extremely rare.

Alston notes that these grammars and dictionaries can throw light on contemporary attitudes to the English language. Conversely, they can also throw light on the contemporary state of the French language. The early books very often stress pronunciation; for example, Alexander Barclay's *Introductory to Wryte and to Pronounce Frenche* (1521), surviving in a single copy at the Bodleian, or the better-known work by Claude de Sainliens (Hollyhand), *The French Schoole-maister, wherein is most plainlie shewed, the true and most perfect way of pronouncing of the Frenche tongue* (1573), with frequent reprints up to 1668. There is still much to be learnt from such sources about the pronunciation of sixteenth-century French.

Many authors set themselves to the writing of French grammars, but only a few became successful. From the entries in the *Bibliography*, these seem to be Claude de Sainliens in the sixteenth century, Claude Mauger in the seventeenth and Abel Boyer and Louis Chambredin in the eighteenth, all with dozens of editions of the various works, reworkings and abridgements listed. Boyer's *Royal Dictionary* first appeared in 1699; by 1800, there had been twenty-three editions of the full *Dictionary*, and

twenty-six of its abridgement: both remained in print throughout the nineteenth century.

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